
THE
H I S T O R Y
OF
L O R D B E L F O R D,
AND
M I S S S O P H I A W O O D L E Y.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

V O L. I.



THE SERIES OF LETTERS

VOL. I.

*This book owned by the careful
reign by Lady and shared
by Gentlemen.*

THE
HISTORY
Historically an excellent

OF
Victory
LORD BELFORD,

July 31st 1784
AND

Miss SOPHIA WOODLEY.

IN A
SERIES OF LETTERS.

VOL. I.

—“ blessings ever wait on virtuous Deeds,
“ And though a late, a *sure* Reward succeeds.”

L O N D O N:
Printed for Francis Noble, opposite Gray's Inn
Gate, Holborn. 1784.



P R E F A C E.

THOUGH the generality of novel writers very frequently exhibit their productions without preface, advertisement, or even apology (which last is indeed too often necessary) yet the author of the following little work cannot venture so boldly forth into public view, without making some attempt that may apologize for errors, and at the same time soften, if not wholly prevent, the rigour of criticism.

The task of the *novelist* (however strange it may sound) is, in my apprehension, more difficult to execute than that of the *historian*. This, I think, will not be denied, when it is considered, that the former having no leading *facts* to direct him in his work, he is ever obliged

obliged to have recourse to *invention*: whilst the writer of *real* history having his events ready *formed* to his hand, the forming of such is no part of his labour; as *there*, even the *shadow* of *fiction* is scrupulously avoided, and *truth* alone, drawn from facts presented to his eye, the principal object of his duty. Whereas the writer of these familiar stories; stories that derive their existence from *imagination* alone, is not only obliged to *create* his *incidents*, but *support* them too, by a train of circumstances consistent with *probability*, and what may be met with every day in *common life*, but he must also *diversify* his *characters*. The contrast between *dejected virtue*, and *insulting vice*, must likewise be *strongly marked*, and *nature* appealed to in every particular.

Great judgment is also required in the *choice* of *characters*. There
are

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are too many in *real life*, not fit to be displayed. The *good* and *bad* should not be so *disposed* as to make them equally pleasing ; for, as an excellent author observes, a young mind may lose the abhorrence of the *vices* of a character, if the graces of *gaiety*, and the sprightliness of *wit* be permitted (as is too often the case in descriptions) to draw a veil over them. Vice may be shewn, but shewn in such a manner, as to excite our contempt and detestation. An agreeable libertine, in *real life*, is too often dangerous ; and what he either *does* or *says*, had better be buried in oblivion, than exposed to the eye of the public.

Nor is the *choice* of *characters*, or an adherence to *probability* alone sufficient : these *domestic* histories should be written to the *heart* ; and should afford some *moral instruction*, that may both improve and

and exalt our ideas of virtue, whilst they teach us to bear the calamities of life with humble confidence in an all-wise Providence, and warn us of the inevitable misfortunes which *ever did*, and *ever will* attend, *sooner or later*, an *imprudent* or *vicious* conduct. How far the author of the following sheets has accomplished these ends, and more particularly the laudable design last mentioned, is cheerfully submitted to the *lover of virtue*, and the *candid reader*.

I have often thought if any writer of acknowledged merit in the literary world, would be at the trouble of examining the various performances of this sort that have been published since the appearance of our professional critics, and candidly point out a complete list of those only that deserve commendation, it would be doing an acceptable service to the public; as the characters

ters that are generally given of them, by the lower order of critics, who are appointed to the office of examining these productions in the Periodical Reviews, are too often found to be shamefully *partial*. I know a worthy and ingenious lady at this time, who bestows a few leisure hours in drawing out useful lessons of instruction, and conveying them through the inviting vehicle of a novel; and this, from a persuasion that such lessons, so conveyed, will have a better effect on the minds of her young readers, than if they were to appear under any other form; agreeably to this well known couplet of Prior :

“ Examples teach where precept fails,
“ And sermons are less read than tales.”*

* Herbert, a poet of the last century, has a thought of the same kind, which, probably, Prior had his eye upon, at the time he wrote the above. It runs thus :

“ A verse may find him who a sermon flies,
“ And turn delight into a sacrifice.”

A few

A few of this lady's performances have appeared in print, and have met with such opposite characters from the whole tribe of minor critics, that she could no way account for. She had given the labours of her studies (for she is above taking money for them) to two different booksellers, and she always found that those novels which were published for one bookseller, had the highest encomiums bestowed on them, whilst those that had the name of the other, were stigmatized with every illiberal term, and pronounced to be the worst of all productions. On her hinting these circumstances to the last-mentioned bookseller, and expressing a wish to be informed of the reason, if possible, of this untoward treatment, he answered with a smile, "I will tell you sincerely, madam, my opinion of the matter in few words.—Your other bookseller has certain connections with the propri-

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prietors of the Reviews, and I have none ; these issue out their mandates to the inferior critics, and they characterize as they are directed. This is the real cause of the difference of character given to your performances ; and by this it is demonstrated how little reason an author has to be elated with such praise, or depressed by such censure."

The generous-minded lady acknowledged the justice of the bookseller's last remark, and immediately made him a present of a new work which she had just finished ; enjoining him, at the same time, not to publish it under any other name than that of his own, if he wished for a continuance of her literary favours.—But enough of these *pseudo critics*, they are not worth a farther thought.

“ Right,”

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“Right,” cries Prudence, “nor any thought at all. Would it be wisdom to provoke a nest of hornets because they had stung your friend?—You will certainly smart for this temerity.”

I expect it, and will try to bear the punishment with becoming submission, and kiss the rod.

“Tis true, tis pity—and pity it is ’tis true.”

E R R A T A.

V O L. I.

- | | | |
|---------|---------|--|
| Page 3, | line 8, | <i>after in, add and.</i> |
| — 24, | — 9, | <i>for these, read those.</i> |
| — 108, | — 11, | <i>for imposter, read impostor.</i> |
| — 114, | — 7, | <i>for breath, read breathe.</i> |
| — 120, | — 15, | <i>for look, read looked.</i> |
| — 121, | — 2, | <i>dele comma, and put a period.</i> |
| — 129, | — 7, | <i>for those, read any.</i> |
| — 133, | — 9, | <i>dele note of interrogation, and put a semi-colon.</i> |
| — 134, | — 13, | <i>dele he.</i> |
| — 139, | — 4, | <i>for through, read though.</i> |
| — 142, | — 1, | <i>for should, read would.</i> |
| — 144, | — 4, | <i>dele comma, and put a period.</i> |
| — 150, | — 9, | <i>for At last, read So, Madam.</i> |
| — 161, | — 14, | <i>for cares, read care.</i> |
| — 163, | — 8, | <i>for breath, read breathe.</i> |
| — 166, | — 17, | <i>for of ingratitude, read and ingratitude.</i> |

T H E

THE
HISTORY
OF
LORD BELFORD,
AND
Miss SOPHIA WOODLEY.

LETTER I.

Mr. M'Callaghan, to Major Bafto, at Bath.

Village of S—, May 10.

UPON my word, Jack, thou
art a mighty clever fellow;
and I honour *part* of thy sage ad-
vice in thy last epistle: — but canst

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A

thou

thou really, my friend, imagine I should be so egregiously stupid, as to follow down to Bath that old, toothless dowager, Lady P——, on the bare *supposition* of her having a *tolerable* jointure?—— No—no, Basto, “*here’s* metal more attractive,” —a fine girl of nineteen, with four thousand pounds a year, you rogue! — and such *timber* on the estate! in short, it is the best *conditioned* affair that, in all probability, will ever be in my way again.—To say truth, however, for *once*, the *girl*, or the old *dowager*, I care not two straws about — ’tis
the

the *money*,—the *money*, my friend, that is the attractive loadstone:—and faith I am reduced to my very last stake.—That cursed affair at Tunbridge undid me:—marriage, or a halter, is now my only resource.—Tell the brotherhood * of the *lucrative* pursuit I am engaged in—that they must advance me another cool hundred.

Methinks you ask, who, or what is this heiress?—or if there is any probability of my succeeding?—To your first question I

* A set of gamblers, at Bath, who distinguished themselves by the above appellation; of which honourable fraternity, this fortune-hunter stiled himself the chief, or captain.

A 2

answer,

answer, Miss Woodley; the divine Sophia Woodley, is the *present* goddess whom I adore; and so would be her great grandmother, if she possessed as many thousands per annum. To your last question I readily answer; “*Did*—(vanity by your leave) — or *could* any girl yet refuse me?” — I have however three powerful rivals — but I have no fears:—clumsey fellows—a curious set truly:—but more of them another time.—We all visit, alternately, at Woodley park—but *I* am visibly the *favourite* with the fair mistress of it. — I play with her lap-

lap-dog by the hour together—have handed her to her coach more than once—I drink tea with her when I please—have said a hundred fine things—and, in short, have made my *honourable* propofals of laying my *person* and *fortune* at her feet.—(I *am* at *present* a colonel in the guards, nephew to the earl of L—) She heard me with much sweetness—her soft answer was—“that she was too young to enter on the cares of matrimony—that she should be in no haste to settle—and that she had not yet seen the man whom she should perferably chuse for a
A 3 husband.”

husband."—A little lying rogue!—
If this girl, Jack, is not in love
with me all this time to distraction—
may I never throw a die again :—
but it is the sex—the sex.—Her
answers, I find, to the whole body
of us rivals, has been much to the
same tendency, — and as one is not
more preferred than the other, we
are upon a ~~very~~ amicable footing
together: — no *tilting* going for-
ward; — not a single duel has been
thought of.—How crest-fallen will
these poor devils be, when I carry
off the *golden-fleece*!—The girl her-
self is all softness and simplicity:—
has

Has seen but little of *life*, and still less of the gay world:—has been bred in utter obscurity and retirement:—all which makes for thy friend.—This estate (on which I look with so *languishing* an eye) was left her, not long since, by a brother, who died in India.—I have no father, brothers or uncles to encounter in this *business*, heaven be praised:—nor so much as an old maiden aunt, to guard the prize.—So much the better, say I.—There is, however, a clergyman's widow, her companion, who resides with her at present:—these kind of old

cats serve to keep up appearances—
and a girl is not then *supposed* to be
left to herself.—The woman is de-
cent and civil to me; but she shall
not live with us.—Here is likewise
a visitant, a little arch baggage—the
sentimental friend of my Sophia;—a
devilish shrewd hussy;—she has
an eye so scrutinizing, that, faith,
I am afraid, sometimes, she will
find me *out*.—At present, however,
every thing goes on swimmingly—
and I hope in one month more to
invite you to my seat at Woodley-
park. O Jack, with what rapture
do I survey the *dirty* acres which
surround

surround it!—with what heart-felt delight do I contemplate (not the soft blue eyes of Sophia Woodley) the lofty groves of stately oaks and elms, which shall soon groan under the stroke of the axe, and as soon be converted into sterling cash!—Extatic thought!—And, O Jack! as the song says,

“ When all the tedious farce is o’er,
 “ And spouse has crown’d me with her dow’r,
 “ Should sudden ruin meet her;
 “ And should her coachman break her neck,
 “ Unmov’d, I’d stand, amidst the wreck,
 “ Nor swear at heedless Peter,”

but would take *Kitty* again into keeping, and shew my face once more at White’s, with the *best*

lord, at the gaming table, in the land.

Adieu ! felicitate me upon my approaching prospects. *Remember* you are to direct to the honourable colonel Townly, at ———, where I have taken very genteel lodgings (not a mile from *all* my foul pants for) and am attended by a smart valet, and two footmen in elegant liveries.—But I must attend the scene of action, therefore can only add,

I am thine ever,

PATRICK M'CALLAGHAN.

L E T.

LETTER II.

Miss Harriot Granby, to Miss Eliza Selwyn.

Woodley-Park, June 1.

YES, my Eliza, if happiness was ever found on earth, it certainly is to be met with in this delightful mansion:—the lovely mistress of it seems perfectly to understand the *real use* of riches, as she makes her newly acquired very large fortune, the means of relieving every object of distress, within many miles around her.—Poverty is utterly banished from the simple huts of the neighbouring villages—and sweet content,

joined with virtuous industry, reigns throughout them—the playful infant is taught to lisp the name of Miss Woodley ; and the aged peasants in our evening walks among the cottages, bless her, as she enters their little peaceful abodes.

You request a journal of our employments, our amusements, &c. Your desire, child, is impossible to grant, our time so swiftly passes in such an infinite diversity of little pleasures :—it glides away, indeed, like a smooth stream, without a breath of wind to ruffle it. Suf-

fice it to say our mornings are spent in reading, walking, making up, or contriving neat cloathing for the industrious poor.—Were you a fine lady, my Eliza, here you would exclaim — “ Ah ! stupid “ employments ! ” — But you are a good girl—and therefore I will proceed with the short detail I was entering upon.

Good Mrs. Harris, the worthy woman I mentioned in my former letters to you, whom my angelic friend has taken (in consideration of her distresses) as her companion, reads to us, whilst we make use of

our

our needle—perhaps in the sweet bower of roses—the hermitage—or the painted temple.—Our afternoons we devote entirely to amusements:—such as little concerts—parties on the water—or perhaps a dance on the green—(and I assure you we have our *beaus*,—of whom more presently)—or we frequently stroll down, in a fine evening, to inspect a charity school of twenty little girls, which my charming friend has lately established; or ramble among, and visit the sick and infirm in the cottages. Miss Woodley, not content with barely
sending

sending her domestics among *her poor*, as she calls them, will herself *hear* their *own* tale, that she may be a better judge what is proper for them, than by hear-say ;— she will, with her own *gentle hand*, bind up their wounds, or administer the healing draught. — In a course of these *pleasures*, my Eliza, for *pleasures* they are of the most refined nature,

“ Does varied life glide unperceiv'd away.”

I may sum it up in a few words, that one continued series of benevolent actions, intermixed with the most elegant, and innocent
amuse-

amusements of life, is the delightful business of Miss Woodley's hours, in which your happy Harriet (whilst her visiter) is so agreeably employed as to partake.

You ask for an account of the beauties of this delightful situation, in which the hospitable abode of my Sophia is placed:—but I am *ill* at description, child.—Imagine every thing beautiful, that woods, water, and hills, covered with greenest verdure can bestow, and then you will have some faint idea of——But hold! I can think of nothing so much like the de-

lightful situation of Woodley-Park, as Fielding's most beautiful and inimitable description of the seat of Mr. Allworthy — which you will find at large depicted in the first pages of his admirable Tom Jones, and to which I refer you ; as it perfectly resembles the charming scenes with which I am here surrounded.

You also ask for a particular account of the person and beauty of my lovely friend ; and if she most resembles the celebrated lady C—, or the admired Miss W—. Neither, neither, my dear ;—she has
not

not the bold stare of the former,—
nor the pert air of the latter.—
Miss Woodley's beauty is all soft-
ness :—she is more like the cele-
brated picture of that beautiful
Madona in your father's library
(which we have so often admired)
than of any thing of which I can
give you an idea.—She has all that
modest sweetness, that attractive
langour, which words must fall in-
finitely short of describing. Her
complexion has more of the *lilly*
than the *rose*, except when height-
ened by the blush of modesty, or
the glow of exercise. Her eyes
are

are animated, and perfectly indicate the feelings of her heart.—In her whole manner there is an indescribable *tenderness*, amazingly pleasing. — I say nothing of her fine height, or elegance of shape, both which she possesses, with every other advantage of person, in a high degree. Of Miss Woodley it may be truly said,

“ Grace is in all her steps,

“ Heav’n in her eye,

“ In every action, dignity and love.”

Her mind has been finely cultivated, and she excels in every polite accomplishment : owing to the
care

care of an aunt (now no more) under whom she was bred. I say *owing*—for my fair friend (as I think I have formerly told you) lost her parents very early in life ; and had it not been for the above-mentioned valuable relation, the then little, unfriended Sophia, must have been destitute.—Her parents were of genteel extraction, but not rich :—and this estate was left to her brother by a god-father, who sent him out to India, a few years since.—Mr. Woodley was a most worthy young man, extremely fond of his amiable sister. The
estate

estate (in case he had no issue) was to devolve to her by will. Her brother married in Bengal, but died soon after childless ; consequently this great acquisition fell to my young friend, who has not been in possession of it above half a year. The widow Woodley remains in India.—She is not, I find, a *very* amiable woman in her *manners*, though young, and handsome.

My charming friend enters into her exalted sphere with an elegance as if she had been bred always to fill the high rank she now possesses. I have already told you the admirable

able use she makes of her fortune.

“ But these beaux,” (my Eliza asks) “ what, Harriet, were you
“ going to tell me of them in the
“ beginning of your letter ?”

Well, my dear, I am now going to enter upon them.—To begin then—there are no less than—but this moment I am summoned to the drawing-room, company being just arrived to tea :—Adieu then for the present :—my next shall inform you of all that farther passes in this delightful abode of elegance and hospitality.

Your's, ever,

HARRIET GRANBY.

LETTER III.

Miss Harriet Granby, to Miss Eliza Selwyn.

Woodley Park, June 19.

I AM just stolen from company,
into a little snug corner in the
most retired part of the gardens,
to indulge myself in conversing
one half hour with my Eliza.
I make no merit in having *escaped*
from three card tables, as there
can be no virtue in refusing what
one dislikes. Miss Woodley her-
self never plays; but you know,
there is a species of mortals who,
unless they have *cards* in their
hands, are sure to *scandalize* their
neigh-

neighbours. Miss Woodley, observing her guests had begun a subject of the defamatory kind, immediately rung for cards. Scandal does not always arise from a real malignity of heart, but often from a scarcity of ideas;—and if you put a few bits of painted paper into the hands of these beings who are prone to it, they instantly clear up, and are the best-humoured things in the world;—conversation then takes another turn;—if that kind of discourse, which usually passes at the card-table, can be *called* conversation.---But it is time I account
for

for my silence for near three weeks.

I have had a little fever which has rendered me really unable to write:—but at present am perfectly recovered:—indeed I never was better in my life; and should have begun this letter a week ago, but my careful nurse, the incomparable mistress of this delightful mansion, has snatched the pen out of my hand, more than once, lest the posture of writing should be hurtful to me.—Say not a word, my Eliza, of this late illness of mine to my tender father, lest he should

be alarmed;—for I am at present as *well*, as I am *happy*; and both in a high degree.

I think I finished my last letter with an assurance, that I would acquaint you, with some account of our *beaus*; we have no less than *four*, who are *smitten*, and to use the *cant* phrase, dying for love of Miss Woodley.—But such a set of animals!—I think I must *treat* you, Eliza, as you love odd characters, with a description of the whole group.—I should first say, that my charming friend has long since given them their *answer* of refusal;—

refusal ;—yet such is the vanity of these wretches, that they still continue to flatter themselves with *hope*, and are still often in our little parties of amusement ;—but as the female relations of some of these enamoured swains are our visiting neighbours, Miss Woodley, by no means, can absolutely break off their acquaintance. You will believe, from the attempt I have made to draw her character, she is not fond (as too many of our sex are) of a set of *danglers* ;—but it is from the *vanity* of *these* men, child, their *own* vanity, that each grounds

his *bope*, not from any encouragement of my sweet friend.

But now for a small sketch of their character, after I have informed you, that this formidable troop of rivals consists of a motley group ; to wit, a peer of the realm, a doctor of divinity, a fox-hunting squire, and a very smart colonel of the guards.—To begin with the peer.

Lord Whiffle is the most insignificant *thing* you ever beheld : a passion for trifles (exclusive of the fondness he professes to feel for the lovely mistress of this mansion) engrosses

glosses his whole soul — I never see him without thinking of these lines of Mr. Pope,

“ Sir Plume, of amber snuff-box proudly vain,
“ And the nice conduct of a clouded cane.”

Such is his attention for dress, that when I often think he is admiring the beautiful arm of his lovely mistress, I discover it is the elegance of the Brussels-lace ruffle, which adorns it, that is the object of his admiration. When I fancy he is gazing with transport, on the shining ringlets of her auburn-hair, I perceive his eyes are rivetted to the diamond sprig, or little fly

cap.—He often exclaims, with a sigh, — “ Miss Woodley, these
 “ blond lappets are not to be
 “ borne—they are killing:—and
 “ this hat, with its blue ribbons,
 “ is enough to fire the heart of
 “ an anchoret. — What a neck-
 “ lace is that!—It is ravishing!—
 “ And those ear-rings enchant-
 “ ing!”—In this manner is his
 lordship ever exclaiming.—He has
 written a copy of verses on Miss
 Woodley’s bracelet, and another on
 her tippet.—In short, he appears
 wonderfully smitten—if not with
 the fair lady, with her lovely ap-
 pendages,

pendages, though he professes that his passion for *her* is so violent, that it is impossible he can *exist* if she continues to be inflexible.—

He complains already of some symptoms of a declining state of health (owing to her cruelty) and that he must, in consequence thereof, *try* the Hotwell at Bristol, as otherwise a consumption will be his fate he is convinced.—So much for our peer, whose seat, I may add, is in this neighbourhood, and whose sisters (very *fine* ladies) visit us.

Now for the jolly fox-hunting

'squire, I really believe he loves Miss Woodley, as my favourite poet sings,

“Best of all things—next his horse.”

And, as if he imagined feats of extraordinary strength and agility, would have influence, is perpetually bragging of leaping five-bar'd gates, driving the foxes out of the county—fording rivers—following the chase for ten hours—with other notable achievements.—He boasts of an amazing stock of health, as if it was a *merit* in himself, not the gift of Heaven. I should like this man better, if he had not that

ridiculous

B 4

odious

odious *affectation*, for such it is, which one often sees in country 'squires, namely, that of being *blunt and honest*. These kinds of hearty folks will spit in a man's face—knock him down—or look *defiance* on every one they meet, because, forsooth, they cannot cringe, nor fawn—nor flatter.—In fact, they seem to imagine that to be as *rude* as a bear, is a sure sign of *honesty*. No longer ago than yesterday, this *honest blunt* man accosted a very amiable young married lady, who is so unfortunate as to have a bad husband, and who

was visiting here, with a roomful of other company, with these words, — “ Well, Mrs. Pringle, “ what, does your husband get “ drunk every night, as usual ?— “ I find the wench he had the last “ bastard by, is committed to “ jail,” — I leave you to guess, how much the delicacy of poor Mrs. Pringle was hurt at this rude address. An aunt of the ‘squire, a maiden lady, who was likewise here, interrupted the horrid wretch, with, — “ Fye—nephew, fye.” — “ Fye !—(he returned) for what ? “ Bob Pringle loves a “ pretty “ girl—

“ girl—what of that?—I am Old

“ Tell-truth—blunt and honest:—

“ tell the truth, and shame the

“ devil, is my *motto*.”

He was running on, when a glance of resentment for his impertinence to Mrs. Pringle, from the piercing eyes of Miss Woodley, silenced him: Shake-spear hits this sort of character exactly, when he says, speaking of this kind of affectation in his tragedy of Lear,

“ This fellow hath been praised for his bluntness,

“ And doth affect a garb quite from his calling;

“ But his saucy roughness is a craft,

"A cunning far beyond than what appears."

"In twenty silly, ducking observants,

"Who stretch their duties nicely."

A few more words concerning

'Squire Rockwood, and I have done with him.—It is hardly possible to conceive so strong a contrast as is exhibited between him, and his delicate rival Lord Whiffle, were you to see them together: the former all roughness and rudeness;—the other all softness and gentleness. Whiffle is evidently afraid of Rockwood;—who often screams in his ear, the *view Halloo*, or roars out, *Hark away to the merry*

“merry ton & horn.” On these occasions his poor lordship moves his seat—with gently exclaiming,

“I protest—Sir, I protest—you are so vociferous—so very boisterous—do you think the ladies here can bear this tremendous noise?”

“I know your lordship cannot, (returns the squire) and that you would not mount a hunter in my stud for ten worlds: no, no, you had rather be piddling the leg of a ragged frog, than eating a slice of cold roast beef in a frothy morning.”

“Hear

“Hear him, ladies,” (rejoins his lordship) “and tremble for the tramontine,—I profess he perfectly unhinges my *nerves*.”

Miss Woodley says, the ‘squire’s mode of courtship is the finishing stroke of his character, which she thus describes.

After a few scrapes of his rustic foot, he begins, first loudly hemming, to shew the strength of his lungs — “Madam—Miss Woodley, if you can *fancy* me, I am your man. — Sound wind and limb. — Your money, mind me, good Miss Woodley, I value not

“ a rush. — No, ’tis that sweet
“ pretty face that I adore. — Don’t
“ stand shilly-shally — you shall
“ live upon the fat of the land at
“ Rockwood-Hall — and you shall
“ go to London once in three
“ years — that is — if you are not
“ down in the straw. — Come,
“ don’t blush — you know what I
“ mean. — I love you : — what
“ more can I say ? — You must not
“ expect fine speeches, or compli-
“ ments from honest Tom Rock-
“ wood.”

O my Eliza, that you were here
to enjoy these strange beings ! — But

now

now I must attempt the description of the doctor of divinity, and our fine laced handsome colonel.—
To begin with Doctor Simper.

A beau-parson, sleek, fat and fair—about thirty years of age. He has a good temporal fortune—and has a fine living, besides a prebend, and bids fair to enjoy as many sinecures as any priest in the kingdom, who leaves

“To tatter’d crape, the drudgery of prayer.”

An eternal smile sits on the round, unthinking face of this reverend divine; whilst (as far as the colour

lour of his coat will admit) he is absolutely the greatest beau imaginable. His coat is of the lightest kind, of grey, ornamented with black frogs; instead of buttons — the waistcoat equally elegant, being the richest paduasoy adorned with fringe, and bugles. — His buckles and diamonds, his miftockings *white silk*, and his hair dressed in the highest French taste, frosted and powdered; when I first saw him, I innocently asked, “Who is that gentleman so splendidly dressed in gay *second* *morning*?”

He

He often casts a melancholy glance on his un-ruined hands, which are however sufficiently ornamented with a fine brilliant ring, and some valuable antiques set in gold. He breathes nothing but perfumes, and sleeps every night in dog's-skin gloves. In a word, take him for all in all, he is the most insufferable fop I ever met with. — His tooth-pick cases, fancy snuff-boxes, and trinkets, are enough to set up a toyman in the country. — He affects to be extremely sentimental, and unfortunately fancies he has a taste for music. —

music. — I say, *unfortunately*, because he knows just enough of the German flute to be very *troublesome* to my charming friend, in attempting to accompany her harpsichord. On these occasions, his *white hands*, and his diamond-ring, are seen to great advantage. In fine, his pride and affectation are intolerable. I have not the least doubt, but he imagines himself *quite sure* of the lovely Sophia, — and treats his group of rivals with the most scornful air of superiority. — He *appears* most wonderfully smitten, and is for ever bragging
of

of the *disinterestedness* of his passion. — But enough of Doctor Simper.

The *last* I mention (though by far the most agreeable man) is the smart colonel — He is handsome, and well bred, and seems to have seen much of the world. He is quite the man of fashion; though I really believe free from the vices of the age.* — I assure you, my dear, he is often so obliging as to read to us some of the most moral authors in the English language,

* Pity that this unsuspecting lady had not been, on this occasion, blest with the *spear* of *Athene*.

whilst

whilst we sit at our needles.—This gentleman has at present, a very handsome fortune, and is nephew to the Earl of L—, from whom he has great expectations. But wealthy, accomplished, and handsome as he is, he has not made the smallest impression on the heart of my fair friend.—In short, her *hour* is not come ;—and I fear, when she *does* love, her extreme sensibility will render her unhappy. — You will, perhaps, fancy from my partial description of our gallant officer, that his piercing black eyes have made some havock in

that

that little breast of mine, which has yet remained *un-conquered*.—

No—no, my dear, I am still so happy as to be able to carol my favourite song,

“My heart’s *my own*, my will’s the fame.”

But not another word of this man, who never will be, I am convinced, accepted by my angelic Sophia.

I have a thousand questions to ask you about your lovers—your amusements, &c. but must be obliged to conclude, as the lady who carries this packet to London

don (for it is too large to send by the post) sets out this day. Adieu then, ever—ever your's,

HARRIET GRANBY.

P. S. I have unsealed my letter, which was finished some hours since, to inform you of a most alarming circumstance, I have just accidentally heard.—Good God!—I tremble so from astonishment and concern, that I can hardly hold my pen.—“The matter?”—You cry.—Well then—it is no less than that a gentleman just arrived from Bengal, called here this morning, who

who was a particular acquaintance, it seems; of the deceased brother of my charming friend. This gentleman imparted to me most disagreeable news, which he desired I would reveal as soon as possible to Miss Woodley, as she happened not to be at home when he called.—In short, he told me, the widow of Mr. Woodley was pregnant at his death, and was brought to-bed of a son about eight months after his decease.—So that my incomparable friend must give up her whole estate, and present possessions to this child, he being the
undoubted

undoubted heir at law.—Heavens !
What a change is here !—Mr. Ellis, who told me this alarming news, informed me farther that he saw the child ; and that Mrs. Woodley was preparing to set out for England with her young heir as soon as possible, to claim the estate and effects belonging to her deceased husband.—The immense distance from India, and the last ships from thence having been detained by some accident at the Cape, longer than usual, has prevented these very disagreeable and unexpected tidings from reaching England be-

fore.—This Mrs. Woodley, I find, is none of the most amiable of women:—but however that be, this child must have the estate.—Mr. Ellis desired me to impart this sad news to my amiable friend as soon as possible, as he knows not how soon the widow may arrive.

Gracious Heaven! How can I reveal it?—Pity me, Eliza—Pity me.—How loth shall I be—how repugnant will it be to my nature to disturb the sweet tranquillity of my Sophia, by the unfortunate recital! — Unfortunate, I repeat—for, alas! She will lose her *all*!

I think

I think I before told you, in some of my former letters, that the lovely girl was quite destitute of a provision for life, till this acquisition fell to her by the death of her brother.—I told Mr. Ellis I hoped Mrs. Woodley on her arrival would do something handsome for her sister-in-law.—He shook his head, and replied, “ I fear
 “ nothing of that kind can be
 “ *hoped* for from so avaricious and
 “ low-minded a woman.”

Ah, my sweet friend ! Must you once more then struggle with the hardships of an unfeeling world ?
 Forbid it Heaven ! But

But I see her returning this moment in her chariot from her visit. She is driving up the avenue, and looks and smiles at her Harriet. Alas, sweet innocent! — Little does she imagine what a tale I have to unfold! — I must, at least, take a few days to consider in what manner I can best break this matter to her. — How will the aged poor, — the lisping infant, — feel the loss of their beneficent mistress! — But I must tear myself from the heart-wounding subject, and seal my letter.

My charming friend is now alighted from her carriage, — she is running,

running, in high spirits, up stairs to me—singing in the gaiety of her heart.—Oh, Eliza ! How can I disturb—how shall I be able to give distress to her cheerful innocence ?—But she comes—I must throw down my pen.

LETTER IV.

Edmund Granby, Esq. to Miss Granby.

London, June 17.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I Grieve to be the messenger of ill tidings ; but I have a most disagreeable circumstance to dis-

close,—and which *must* be imparted to Miss Woodley, as soon as possible.—I would write myself to her on this subject; but think it will be less *abrupt*—less *alarming*, when introduced in conversation from so very *intimate* and affectionate a friend as yourself.

Know then, that the widow of Mr. Woodley is arrived in the Downs—where the ship now lays, with a son, of which she was, it seems, pregnant (though early so) at the decease of her husband. By this unlooked-for accident, your very amiable friend must resign

sign the whole of her present possessions. This trial for her will be great: but we *must* submit to these inevitable strokes of the Almighty: and to *submit* to them, without murmuring, is doubtless a very pleasing sacrifice to the supreme disposer of events. Miss Woodley's fine understanding, and uncommon turn of mind, added to the most refined virtues, will, I hope, enable her to bear this very unexpected reverse of fortune with resignation. I am sorry to add to you (but in confidence) that this widow Woodley is not only an art-

ful woman, but low-bred, and self-interested. Her husband married her entirely for her beauty.—She has, I understand from a correspondent of mine in Bengal, behaved rather *gay*:—but whatever her behaviour may have been, this boy, of whom she was pregnant when her husband died, is undoubtedly his heir.—I leave it to your own discretion in what manner to reveal this disagreeable news; and only beg it may be done very soon:—as I should not be at all surpris'd, if the *indelicacy* of Mrs. Woodley, on her immediate arrival

val in London, should lead her to drive down at once to Woodley Park, and claim the estate without farther ceremony. — Assure your beloved Sophia, in *me*, she shall ever find a friend, a counsellor, and protector.

I have had a return of my gouty complaints:—in short, my Harriet, I grow old apace; and fear your unhappy brother's profligate, abandoned conduct (now worse than ever) will be a means of increasing my complaints. — My physicians have ordered me to try a journey to Lisbon:—if I go, my

Harriet—my little darling, must accompany me thither:—but of that we will talk hereafter: at present, I am in no *immediate* need of the journey, and hope to live yet, old and infirm as I am, to dance at my Harriet's wedding.

My most affectionate compliments attend your amiable friend: bid her be of good cheer, and remind her of a kind Providence.—Farewel, my dear girl:—believe me your tender,

and affectionate father,

EDMUND GRANBY.

L E T.

LETTER V.

Miss Harriet Granby, to Miss Eliza Selwyn.

Woodley Park, June 27.

MY DEAR ELIZA,

NEVER let the men in future boast of their superior fortitude,—their stoicism, &c. in preference to our poor weak sex, in combating misfortunes:—the charming Sophia Woodley is a *philosopher* worth them all:—not even the divine *Socrates* himself could struggle better with adversity. Yes, my friend, I have at last divulged the unfortunate secret,—but want words to express

the noble mindedness which appears on this occasion, throughout the whole behaviour of this lovely woman.—But as you always wish me to be very particular, I will endeavour to give you a minute account of my imparting this strange reverse of fate to my angelic friend.

I had been, for some days, in the utmost perplexity how to act, and how to begin the cruel subject.

Good Mrs. Harris, to whom I had made known the tale, and I went mournfully about the house, and often met, and shed tears in a corner, at the fate of our invaluable friend,

friend, who, for some time past, has had a remarkable flow of spirits.—This very circumstance rendered me still more loth to disturb that charming vivacity which appeared in her every word and action.—At length, yesterday morning, she came into my dressing-room, where poor Mrs. Harris and I were sitting in a most disconsolate manner.—Sophia, I say, entered,—and never did she look so *much* the angel.—She had in her hand, I observed, a large sheet of paper, on which were drawn some plans of buildings.—“Harriet,”

WOL

said

said she—but I will give you the dialogue as it passed, to avoid dry repetitions of says I—and says she.

“ Harriet, and my good Mrs.

“ Harris, I am come to ask your

“ opinions :—I am going to make

“ an alteration on my estate.” (I

sighed—I started at the words—“*my*

“ *estate*”) “ Here is a plan, which

“ I have been all this morning

“ drawing, of a small hospital, or

“ rather an infirmary for the aged

“ sick, or for those who are past

“ their labour, which I intend to

“ have erected on the very spot

“ where those two old farm-houses

had

“ now

“ now stand, called the Willows.
“ Here, look at the plan, and tell
“ me what you think of it. There
“ will be about twenty comforta-
“ ble lodging-rooms,—and I shall
“ endow it with two hundred
“ pounds per annum :—an apothecary,
“ and proper nurses shall reside
“ in the house. And I further
“ intend to build, just at the
“ entrance of the park (for I shall
“ inspect it every day myself) a
“ kind of working-school for thirty
“ poor children, of which this
“ is the plan (presenting another
“ drawing). I shall allot each boy
“ a little

“ a little garden, that he may be
 “ early initiated in the knowledge
 “ of agriculture—and the produce
 “ of each garden shall go towards
 “ supplying the house with whole-
 “ some vegetables.—Well, child,
 “ don’t you approve my plan ?”

Oh ! How my heart, Eliza,
 was torn to hear the sweet innocent
 run on in this manner !—I held
 down my head, as if to examine the
 plan, but in fact to conceal the
 starting tear.

“ Why, yes, Miss Woodley, I
 “ greatly approve your generous
 “ scheme:—these things are all
 “ mighty

“mighty well—and praise-worthy;

“but—if—if—”

“But—and *if* Harriet! What

“means the girl?—Harriet, you

“are provokingly strange this

“morning.—Pray let me under-

“stand you.”

“Why, my dear Sophia, in all

“probability you will marry, and

“then—that will make—strange

“alterations.”

“No, my friend—I shall never

“marry.—I intend to live in a

“state of celibacy, and die an old

“maid at Woodley Park. —(I

“sighed here bitterly, though all

was.

“ was spoken in a vein of pleasan-
“ try). I have formed a number of
“ little schemes of happiness in
“ this sweet spot.—I have some
“ thoughts of rebuilding another
“ wing to the house, opposite the
“ shrubbery.—No—no, Harriet, I
“ have not the least thought of
“ marriage.”

“ And yet, my dear Miss
“ Woodley, (endeavouring to force
“ a half-smile) so *many* lovers!—
“ will you let those poor distressed
“ set of rivals, who daily haunt
“ you, all die from disappoint-
“ ment?”

“ Ah,

“ Ah, wretches !—name them
 “ not ; I would venture to lay a
 “ small wager, that notwithstanding
 “ all their violent professions
 “ of love and so forth, it is my
 “ fortune, child, that is the at-
 “ tractive loadstone.—They may
 “ be *charmed*, as they call it ; but
 “ I believe it is more with Wood-
 “ ley Park, and the estate belong-
 “ ing to it, than with their owner
 “ Sophia Woodley.”
 “ That, my dear, you would
 “ soon see, were you to experience
 “ a change—a reverse of fortune,
 “ I had, last night, Sophia,
 “ the

“the strangest dream imaginable.

“It was, that Mr. Woodley’s wi-

“dow had produced a son — an

“heir to this estate.—Who knows

“but that there may be some

“*truth* in this strange dream?”

In short, Eliza, to be brief—

seeing my charming friend in such

good spirits, I opened the whole

business :—I informed her of all I

had heard—and that the unhappy

secret had made me miserable for

some days.—Heavens ! with what

magnanimity did she hear the tale !

“Well, (she returned) I shall

“be happy to restore this estate to a

“child

“ child of my dear, and much la-
 “ mented brother. — Dear little
 “ boy—may he long live to enjoy
 “ it !—Harriet, why do you weep?
 (for I was greatly affected) —
 “ There is no cause for weeping.—
 “ You shall see—all the world shall
 “ see—that I can support *adversity*
 “ better, perhaps, than *prosperity*.
 “ Nay, were even a state of abso-
 “ lute poverty to be my lot,—I
 “ have youth, health, and some
 “ little ingenuity—I have hands,
 “ my Harriet, which disdain not
 “ labour.”
 I could not stand this—I flung
 my-

myself into a chair, and wept almost aloud—which however was some relief to my oppressed spirits. —But to proceed.

The whole day my angelic friend preserved her fortitude—her amazing resignation—and even talked with pleasure of a cottage—and earning a livelihood, by virtuous industry.

“ I think,” said she, [smiling,
 “ I will teach a little school in
 “ some of the cheap northern
 “ counties; possibly I might there
 “ know more real happiness, than
 “ in a coach and six, with an estate
 “ of

“ of four thousand pounds a year,
 “ and surrounded by servants.—
 “ How little, in fact, is necessary
 “ for the support of life, when
 “ divested of its ridiculous super-
 “ fluities, its idle parade of empty
 “ show !—God grant I may never
 “ know a worse misfortune, than
 “ poverty ? — I shall not, my
 “ Harriet, stand in need of *all* my
 “ stock of philosophy, small as it
 “ is, to support this unlooked-for
 “ change, I assure you.”

It was fortunate I made the im-
 portant discovery to this noble-
 minded woman, when I did ; for
 in

in the evening, by the post, arrived *such* a letter from Mrs. Woodley (who is now got to London with her boy) that I am convinced her *mind* must be as mean, as I find her extraction was.—I will transcribe a copy of her letter, and enclose it to my Eliza, but must reserve it till to-morrow's post, as this epistle has already exceeded the limits of a common post-letter: Adieu, then—till to-morrow.

May we, my friend, and every other young woman, profit by the lesson of fortitude, and absolute
 refig-

resignation, set us by the admirable Miss Woodley ; who, without a tear, or even a sigh, can give up the grandeur, affluence, and the thousand nameless comforts which naturally flow from a large fortune, to struggle with every miserable attendant concomitant of reduced circumstances.

I am, most truly your's,

HARRIET GRANBY.

LETTER VI.

Miss Harriet Granby, to Miss Eliza Selwyn.

Woodley-Park, June 30.

I Now, my Eliza, take up my pen to perform my promise of

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sending

sending a copy of the widow's curious epistle.—My angelic friend is all sweet composure—all calmness and resignation to her fate.—Grieved am I to say, that she will be left quite destitute ; exclusive, you may be however convinced I mean, of my father's and my own unalterable friendship, whose hearts and purses will be ever hers.—I was in hopes she had been left a legacy by her god-mother, but alas ! I find there is nothing of that kind.—But now for the widow's letter.

LET-

L E T T E R

From Mrs. Woodley, to Miss Sophia Woodley.

DEAR MISS,

I AM come over from Bengal with a son, the lawful issue of your brother, and my poor dear husband, Thomas Woodley, Esq. so that you are hereby desired to *quit*.—To be sure you cannot in law—in justice—and equity, think of *with-holding* the estate from my poor baby, who is, as I have above informed you, the lawful begotten son of my wedded husband.—The child is a fine lusty boy, and likely to live to enjoy his possessions.—I think to come in a month's time,

of which I give you early notice, and hope to find the house in proper order for our reception. What money you have received from the estate, we must expect, as I was very big with child when I lost my poor husband, and have been at great expences since, and in coming to *claim* our own: as no one can deny my child to be the rightful possessor of all the estates, goods, and chattels, his father owned, at the time of his death. I purpose to reside at Woodley-Park directly—though, as a young woman, I may perchance marry again. You cannot expect, Miss Sophy,

phy, that I can *injure* my poor fatherless infant, with providing out of the estate for your maintenance; but if you live near us in the country, you shall be welcome to a *meal* at any time. As the interval is so short, the sooner you *quit* the better. I am,

your friend, and servant,

MARTHA WOODLEY.]

P. S. IF you answer this, a letter will come to hand, directed to be left at the India House.

Miss Granby in Continuation.

Vulgar—contemptible woman !
What a letter has she written !—

whether it be the dictates of her own mean soul, or that of some pitiful pettifogging attorney, with her scrap of “law—justice—and equity,” I know not. — God forgive me if I judge wrong; but I must confess I have my doubts about the *legitimacy* of this boy. She makes such a rout about its being *lawfully* born, as if really it should hereafter appear not to be so.—I find her character is a very *suspicious* one: but the vulgar woman may rest perfectly satisfied that she will come into immediate possession of Woodley Park, with all its numerous improvements, and

added

added beauties, which my sweet friend has bestowed on it. She has, indeed, from her exquisite taste, made it a terrestrial paradise.

I enclose a copy of the exalted Sophia's answer to this foolish woman's letter, which you will acknowledge to be a very strong contrast, both in sentiment, and diction.—Her letter is as follows :

Sophia Woodley, to Mrs. Woodley.

MADAM,

I AM favoured with your's, and write by the return of post, as I would not neglect the earliest opportunity of assuring you, that so far from wishing to *with-hold* the

lawful possessions of my beloved and much-lamented brother from his heirs, I shall resign them with the greatest pleasure to my welcome little nephew, who will ever be to me most dear. I shall undoubtedly *quit* Woodley Park by the time you *desire*; and hope you will approve of some few improvements I have made during my being mistress of it.—Indeed I should never have taken possession of this estate and my brother's effects, had I *known* you was, at his death, so *very far advanced in your pregnancy*.

Be in no pain, good madam, about the monies I have already received;

ceived ;—for, be assured, without your having recourse either to law, or justice—they will be faithfully *remitted* to you, and with pleasure *resigned*.—I should be sorry if I could not *descend* into that humble state of life, (to which various misfortunes, even in my infancy had reduced me) with the same ease and resignation to the disposer of all events, as I experienced on being, by the hand of that gracious Providence, raised to a sphere, which was entered into with *regret*, as the death of a most kind—most affectionate brother, was the cause of it. I was the care of heaven

before I had my short-lived acquisition of riches, and the same generous Providence over unprotected youth and innocence, will be my refuge in all future distress, without being a burthen to you, madam, or to any person whatever.

I am, with affectionate love to my nephew, and sincerest wishes that he may long—very long live to enjoy his present possessions,
your most humble servant,

SOPHIA WOODLEY.

Miss Granby in Continuation.

I WILL, my Eliza, suppose you have read the letter of my angelic friend, and that you admire her
spirit

spirit and resignation as much as I do.—She is indeed all sweet composure—all acquiescence to the will of the Almighty. She says, it is most probable the continuation of her exalted state; might, by marriage, or other cause, have been the source of much wretchedness—and that this providential stroke is, in fact, a *blessing in disguise*.

“How know I,” continued the excellent girl, “but that I might have been a prey (my *money* the bait) for some profligate wretch, who, by marriage, might have entailed misery and disease on me, and mine for ever!—Again,

D 6 “Harriet,

“ Harriet, I repeat, I am *extremely*
 “ *contented* with my *change*: nay,
 “ in fact, what have I lost? It was
 “ an accident which gave it to me;
 “ it is an accident which takes it
 “ from me.”

Thus does my young philosophic friend, reason.—Which of the boasted ancient stoics, I should be glad to know, could excel her in this respect?

She has this moment tapped at my closet door, to tell me, as she has long suspected her group of lovers to be of the *interested* kind, that before she leaves Woodley Park, she will make use of a little innocent scheme

she

she has formed, to try their real
 sentiments of her. "I will in-
 form them," said she, "of my
 change of circumstances; when,
 I would lay my life, that, so far
 from continuing their addressees,
 they will *cast me from them*; as
 the poet says;

"Like a detested sin."

"Do as you please, my dear,"
 returned I; "but surely, some
 of them are sincere in their pro-
 fessions."—She shook her head.

"We shall soon see that Harriet.
 But I must now attend the fawns

"in

“ in the park, as the time is but
 “ short, I shall have the pleasure
 “ to feed them.”

Away she tripped in the highest spirits imaginable, and I am now presented with a view from my window of the lovely woman feeding with bread, from her hands, a number of little playful fawns, who are trotting to her, and receiving her bounty, whilst, in wanton gambols, they play around her.— Sweet innocents ! Soon—too soon, alas, will your beneficent mistress be lost to you for ever !

You may depend on my writing again as soon as possible :—and in
 my

my next letter I will give you an account how the lovers behave themselves on this interesting change of circumstances in my admirable friend.—For my part, as much as I dislike them, I cannot think they will *all* be so *very* *base* as to *relinquish* their pretensions on this unfortunate event.—But adieu for the present—and believe me

won't A — most sincerely your's,

no heart HARRIET GRANBY.

P. S. I grieve to hear my gay dissipated brother is, if possible, more a libertine in his conduct than ever.—He has now carried off poor Molly from the mill. A sad affair! I am wretched about him.

LETTER VII.

Miss Harriet Granby, to Miss Eliza Selwyn.

Woodley Park, July 6.

“*FRAILTY*, thy name is *Woman*.”—says a celebrated poet,
 “*Interest*, thy name is *Man*!”—
 says Harriet Granby.

Would you believe it, my Eliza?
 —These dying lovers—these disinterested admirers—O how I execrate the deceitful wretches!—All now renounce my charming friend on the knowledge of her *reduced* state. Aye, the good doctor of divinity, with all his *sentimental* refinement, his *very disinterested* views; 'squire Rockwood, with all his *boasted*
honesty,

honesty, that—to use his own words he “valued not the *fortune* of the “fair Sophia, of a *rush* ;” have both, with the trifling lord Whistle, and *honourable* colonel, at once *disclaimed* all farther views.

My angelic friend (as I told you in my last letter she would) wrote a few lines to each of *these* *worthies*, in which she told them, an unforeseen event had deprived her of the estate at Woodley Park, and with it all her views of future greatness.

The affair, to these *honourable* gentlemen, required not the least deliberation; for in a few hours arrived from each of *them* a letter.

Sophia

Sophia and I have been laughing till we can laugh no more.—But as these curious epistles from these so lately—dying lovers, may afford you as much diversion as they did to us, I will transcribe them for your perusal, *verbatim*. — They strongly mark the character of each, and the *villany* (for I can give it no other name) of their pretensions. The *worthy* lord Whiffle, as a peer of the realm, shall have the precedence of his rivals in this exhibition ; of whose curious epistle take the following words :

The

The Right hon. Lord Whiffle, to Miss
Sophia Woodley.

MADAM,

YOUR obliging billet came to hand ; but the shock I sustained on reading the melancholy contents, affected my nerves to such a degree, I was obliged to call for drops and water.—I had indeed flattered myself with your fair hand, but must now *relinquish* the *heaven* of your charms. — Yes, adorable Miss Woodley, I now resign all pretensions—and submit to the horrors of an eternal separation :—for though I have a due respect for the marriage state, I would not choose to
enter

enter it (good as my fortune is) without an equivalent on the lady's side. The *ardour* of my passion is so violent for your fair self, I leave you to guess my present torments in being obliged to resign you to the possession of another, with whom I wish you, madam, all imaginable happiness, and am

your most obedient

humble servant,

WHIFFLE.

So much for his lordship's *ardent* passion. I will leave him at present to his *assa-fœtida* drops, for the grievous misfortune of losing
(what

(what he seems to have been so *sure* of) four thousand pounds a year, and proceed to transcribe for your *mirth*, the refined, the disinterested Dr. Simper's letter.—Here read it.

The Rev. Dr. Simper, to Miss Sophia Woodley:

MADAM,

WERE I not from my *calling* resigned to every earthly event, I should feel the severest concern for the very unexpected adverse stroke of fortune, with which it has pleased the Almighty to afflict the lovely Miss Woodley: a stroke of fortune, which now obliges me to
declare,

declare, I must for ever resign my hopes of being united to your fair self. I stand in need of all my Christian fortitude—of all my philosophy—to support this misfortune, rendered more grievous, and insupportable to me, from having some time flattered myself that I saw, in the fair eyes of Miss Woodley, a *certain predilection* in my favour: but, *flattering* as it was to my hopes, I must now *resign* you to the possession of one, perhaps not so *sensible* of your *charms* as myself. My passion *all* pure, and *dis-interested* was fixed on your *mind* *entirely*:—but yet I cannot marry a woman

man destitute of fortune, as I have, to speak in confidence, some expectations of the bishoprick of—— and other dignities, which will make it necessary for me to reside in the great world. Miss Woodley, therefore, cannot, I hope, take *amiss* my free declaration—though indeed, I must confess, I never was so *smote*, as by the united accomplishments in which she so much excels her sex. I can only add, that I beseech you to have recourse for comfort to the spiritual aids of religion, in this most *grievous* change. You will find much relief by perusing the book of Job, and other
divine

divine writings. I will *pray for you*, and that we may meet in the unspeakable bliss of a future state in the realms of light, is the unfeigned wish of Miss Woodley's

most obedient servant,

PAUL SIMPER.

Miss Granby in Continuation.

Eliza — my dear Eliza, prithe send us two of your father's stoutest fellows in his regiment (I am convinced the good general, your excellent parent, would spare them on this occasion) to aid and assist the footmen here at Woodley Park, either

either to toss in a blanket, or to drag through our largest *horse pond*, this odious hypocrite, doctor Simper.—What a wretch ! He really seems to insinuate (such is his superlative vanity) that Sophia had given him encouragement !—What pride does he discover in his bishoprick *elect* ! That he will *pray* for my fair friend, is certainly a *heavenly* favour with him ; but alas ! I doubt the prayers of a hypocrite will avail but little.—I know not how it is, but I seem more offended with this man than with all the rest of the hopeful group : possibly it may be, that to

a young sincere heart (I hope mine is a sincere one) hypocrisy appears in its most odious colours, when drest up in the garb of sanctity, and religion.

I will next present you with our fox-hunting squire's epistle—it is quite in *character*,—he is absolutely as great a brute, as the prey his hounds hunt.—He is quite of the class that may be given *to the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field*, in the words of holy writ. But here read, my dear, the letter of this savage.

Thomas

Thomas Rockwood, Esq. to Miss Woodley.

Madam, Miss Sophy.*

So here's a fine kettle of fish likely to happen at Woodley Park I find; and as the old saying is (no offence I hope) when I thought I was running down a *Fox*, she proved a *badger* at last—so that I must be obliged to sheer off, as the saying is, and seek a wife in some other track—for I cannot enter into matrimony without something tack'd to my wife's petticoat:—besides, how else

* The Editor presumes, the letters from these four gentlemen, though their tenour is the same, may from their strong contrast to each other, and from their great diversity of character, afford some little entertainment to the reader.

are younger children to be provided for? To be sure I am so grieved for this sad affair, for I did love that sweet face of yours, that I do openly declare, I had rather have given my favourite hunter Squirrel, my bay colt Spider-catcher, or even my black mare Miss Long-legs, coming five years old next grass;—I had rather, I say, have given up either of the above, or even all of them together, rather than that this cursed affair should have happened—but it cannot be helped—what must be, must be.—Well, fare you happy with some other man.—The land-tax runs high, and I cannot marry a wife,

wife, as the saying is, without a little of the *summum bonum*—you understand me. To be sure there never was a prettier *manor* than what lays round Woodley Park—the covers all stocked with plenty of game:—and I really think you have more *bares* about you, than we have at Rockwood. And then, how cleverly the two *manors* joined together!—Nothing could be more convenient:—a ring-fence only parted them:—Well, however we must submit, and so I subscribe myself

Your humble servant,

TOM ROCKWOOD.

P. S. I forgot the chief thing, which is, if you continue in these parts, you may depend upon my sending you the very first brace of partridge I kill this year; and the first hare:—So keep up your spirits, and think no more about Woodley Park.

Miss Granby in Continuation.

Certainly, Eliza, the squire's present of hare and partridge will go a great way towards keeping up the spirits of my fair friend, and consoling her for the loss of a fine estate.

Supposing you have laughed as much as we have done at the above
curious

curious epistle, I shall next present you with the last *farewell* of our handsome suitor, the laced colonel.

The Honourable Colonel Townly, to Miss
Woodley.

MADAM,

To express my present agonies, at the cutting news of your reverse of fortune, is impossible:—I leave the most lovely of women to *imagine* what cannot be *described*.—

Believe me, madam, whether you possessed the wealth of Peru—or were the mistress of only a cottage, the difference to *me* is perfectly immaterial:—but alas, my inexorable uncle, the earl of——, would at

once disinherited me, were I to marry any woman under the fortune I imagined you possess'd of. He is of all men the most lucrative—the most sordid.—It is true, my own present estate is a genteel one, besides his majesty's commission, but not sufficient for my adorable angel: I must then beg to drop all further pursuit, whatever torments I feel.—You will pardon haste, as a chaise and four are waiting to carry me to town directly.

I am lovely Miss Woodley's most obedient, but at present very unhappy admirer,

CHARLES TOWNLY.

Miss Granby in Continuation.

So much for the smart colonel. Pity, my dear Eliza, is it not, that this *very unhappy admirer's* uncle, the earl, is so *very* lucrative—so *very* fordid a man? — I would not wish to be uncharitable; but I fear the nephew is so too, with all his fine, and disinterested speeches of the wealth of Peru—and a cottage. I would venture to lay a wager, the goodly possessions of my sweet friend were the *loadstone* that attracted this gay spark into these parts.—I am, you know, my dear, a little *romantic* in my notions of this same passion

love;—and think with my favourite poet,

“ Love is not love, ————

“ If riches, birth, or outward circumstance,

“ Can change its flame.”

My letter has already exceeded the limits of the post conveyance, which is indeed commonly the case, when I am writing to you ;— but I shall still make it longer, as I have just heard Mr. Lawson, your agreeable neighbour, who, with his family, is in the next village to ours here, intends me a visit in a few days, by whom I will send this to your fair hands :—I will not therefore close here, but will give you
a fur-

a further account of our present transactions at Woodley Park.

* * * *

Wednesday night.

Gracious heaven! how can we sufficiently thank thee, for all thy goodness!—Well, indeed, said the admirable Sophia, that probably her *late* fortune, might have only rendered her miserable, by being the prey of some abandoned libertine. Would you believe, my dear, that a most shocking discovery has been made?—In fact no less than that the fine colonel Townly, who passed for a man of fortune, and

nephew to an earl, is a most infamous sharper, a notorious gambler at Bath, and other public places of polite resort.—The fellows who were here drest up as his footmen, were his vile associates, and were (I shudder whilst I write it) to have gone shares in the *booty* of my Sophia's fortune. This dreadful discovery was made by the good woman where the vile impostor lodged. Soon after their departure, on opening a drawer in his apartment, she found a letter he had written to some of his wicked agents at Bath, before he was acquainted with the reverse of Miss Woodley's affairs;

in which a most horrid scheme is laid to carry her off, trepan her into a marriage, and that these wretches were to be aiding in the attempt, and one of them to personate a clergyman, to perform the ceremony.—I have seen this dreadful letter, but have not patience to transcribe it.—My maid Patty was down in the village this morning, and there heard of this frightful account. We have since sent her to the good woman with whom the wretch lodged, who readily produced the letter.

Good heavens! I stand aghast.—
How much the gentleman did
this

this wretch appear! how *sentimental*! — how refined in all his opinions! — what a deep laid plot! the nephew of an earl indeed! — Ah, my dear, how cautious ought young women of fortune to be with whom they contract the slightest acquaintance! Sophia, it is true, has incurred no blame on her part, for she never gave him the least shadow of encouragement: — but he still visited — still dangled; — and now, you see, he was determined, as fair means would not do, to carry off the prize. Not, my friend to *debauch* her: — no — no, that was not his intention, for it was by *marriage*

riage alone that he could be legally possessed of her *fortune*.

Good God! what would have been the fate by this time of my angelic Sophia, had it not been for the wonder-working hand of providence! —How short-sighted are we poor ignorant mortals! — We saw not—we knew not, that the deprivation of fortune (a calamity I could not enough lament) was in fact the *very* means of preserving my admirable friend from certain misery—perhaps distraction. But no more of this wretch.

Miss Woodley has only one fortnight more to remain in this beautiful

tiful situation:—for then the time will be elaps'd that her brother's wife allotted for her residence here. With what fortitude does the lovely girl support herself on this trying occasion!—I am convinced, were your little friend Harriet in her state, she would be for ever exclaiming, in the words of Milton,

“ Must I then leave thee, *Paradise*? —

“ These woods — these lawns?

Ye blooming flowers, Who now will tend your glowing beauties? Whonow with un-remitting attention, will nurse your tender buds? Whonow will cultivate your lovely tints, which shame the pencil's dye?

dye?—Sweet moralists, that are as replete with instruction as with beauty, you teach us the short—the transient state of present pomp. To day you spread your opening sweets to the admiring gazer—to morrow, alas! you wither, are cut down, and trodden under foot!

Sophia, my dear, was particularly fond of the cultivation of flowers! She has watched the lovely hyacinth, the purple amaranthus, and the fragrant carnation, with more attention than ever she did her own beauties. If in reality she bestows a sigh of regret at leaving Woodley Park, I am not apt to believe this her

favou-

favourite spot, the parterre, to which my windows look, will claim it.

But see the admirable Sophia is come to enjoy her wonted evening walk, among her favourite blooming beauties, which breath odours and embalm the air with their delightful perfume.—I will observe her behaviour.—She raises the drooping stalk of yon blushing carnation—she sighs—she muses—ah, my sweet friend!—she selects a nosegay of spotted pinks and sweet briar, for your beloved Harriet. — She — but good heavens! what have we here coming up the grand

grand avenue to the house? a coach and six! two post-chaises!—One, two, three, out-riders in gay liveries?—what can be the meaning of all this?—surely it cannot be!—no, that's impossible—the widow was not to come yet this fortnight. What then, or who can this large party be?—Eliza — it must — it must be the widow Woodley, and all her train.—How rude—how indelicate to come without sending—and before the time she herself had appointed!—Yes—yes, it is her, I see now plain enough. — A fat nurse, with a child, first alights from the coach; then descends, or rather

rather jumps out an aukward figure of a man be-dawbed with lace, with a *queue* down to his rump:—he hands out the dainty widow.—Gracious heaven, what a woman!—She has left her mourning, I see—and is arrayed in most tawdry apparel,—with an immense Indian *shawl* thrown over her fat shoulders.—I must run down this moment, and help to support the spirits of my Sophia, who must be amazement itself, at such an un-looked-for visitant. Mercy on me, what a tribe of Abigails are descending from the chaises!—and what an inundation of hat-boxes, portmanteaus, and trunks!

trunks!—But I am summoned.—
Before I sleep I will give you a
farther account of these folks.

* * * * *

Twelve at night.

Well, my Eliza, I am now sat
down to my pen, to perform my
promise of giving you an account
of our unexpected guests.

On my entering the drawing
room, I was pleasingly surprised
with the composure, and dignity,
with which my lovely friend wel-
comed these strange-looking peo-
ple.—She kissed her little nephew,
and placed him on her knees.

*She had an angelic Wel-
disposition*

“ Welcome,” she cried, “ my
 “ dear, to your possessions at
 “ Woodley Park:—long, — very
 “ long, may you live to enjoy
 “ them.—Give me your hand, my
 “ little Tommy, for I suppose you
 “ are named after my dear brother.”

“ No—not he (interrupted this
 “ foolish woman) his name is
 “ Harry—the captain, here, stood
 “ god-father.—Come, child, look
 “ about you—it is *your own house*,
 “ my dear.”

The captain (for such it seems
 he is) was all this time gazing with
 a stupid kind of wonder, at the
 beauty of my lovely friend. This
 the

the widow evidently observed with no small degree of *envy*: though, to do her justice, she herself has certainly a handsome *face*.

I hope you do not think, from the observation I have here made on her *envious* look, that I mean to confine my censure to her alone: No—for sorry am I to say, I scarce ever knew a beautiful woman (the fair Sophia excepted) who did not *feel* a certain disagreeable *pang* in the contemplation of one more lovely than herself.—Your little *plain* Harriet, my dear, has, more than once, made this remark on some of our most *reigning* beauties
 now

now in town, and elsewhere—possibly you will say, that *envy* in *myself* prompts me to make this remark.—But to proceed.

Sophia rang for tea and coffee, whilst the widow, to draw off the captain's attention from my fair friend, looked on him with a very significant *leer*; and asked him how he liked the Park—and if he did not think the deer looked to be very fat?—She then drew him to the window to look at some distant prospects.—The man I thought look confounded, and knew not what to say for himself; and though drest up in very smart regimentals, he

he has nothing in his appearance of the gentleman, do not imagine I dip my pen in gall, when I say this; nor *when* I tell you that allowing for age, nor I never saw a stronger resemblance in two faces, than there is to be found in this man and the young heir.—The same features, *exactly* the same red hair too.—But Sophia, who is *charity* itself, was angry when I made this observation to her just now, as we retired to her apartments.

“ I will not (said she) Harriet
 “ hear a word of this: — Mrs
 “ Woodley was the wife of my
 “ dear, and ever-lamented brother,

“ as such I shall pay her my utmost
 “ respects.”—But to return to the
 drawing room.

After my incomparable friend,
 with her usual composure, had performed the honours of the tea table, the widow was all impatience to see the *house*; and in good truth, not one single nook or cranny of it escaped her examination. — She dragged the captain about with us, and behaved with no small degree of levity in her manner to him.—

But I am weary of saying any more about this woman, than that my maid Patty tells me, she finds, from the newly arrived servants,

that

that their mistress and this man *are*,
or *ought* to be, *man* and *wife*, and
that he will very soon be lord and
master of this delightful mansion.

My sweet Sophia, as you will
imagine, is now all impatience to be
gone; and to leave these people in
the quiet possession of all.—But I
will date again, and tell you when
we set out from hence; for I have
prevailed on my inestimable friend
to go to town with me:—my fa-
ther will rejoice to give her an
asylum.—O my friend, she is *still*
rich; rich in virtue and in friends
who know how to esteem, and love
that virtue this admirable young

creature so eminently possesses. I should indeed be supremely happy in the delightful thought of the dear girl taking up her entire residence with us, were it not, my Eliza (you know I speak always to *you* with the utmost confidence, and you are acquainted with the inmost recesses of my heart)—that I fear the profligate—the wretched way of life my miserable brother has for some years led with regard to our sex (every un-protected one of which he looks on as his *prey*,) may render her living with me *dangerous*.—How shall the pen of a once loving sister write this?

but, alas! my dear, you know he has long *forfeited* every claim to affection, or esteem:—the deep art, and perfidy, which he has shewn with regard to the will of my uncle (not to mention his avowed disobedience to the best of fathers, whose declining state is very apparently to be attributed to the very vicious, abandoned conduct of his son) altogether, I must add, has alienated my affection from him.—I *pity* him, my Eliza, as a *brother* but I detest his *vices*, as a man.

You will perhaps smile, my dear, as at an absurdity, that I should imagine he would dare to form an

injurious thought of my Sophia.—
 It is true, I sometimes blame my
 fears.—Surely, he cannot—would
 not dare to attempt his vile arts on
 his sister's friend?—but, in fact,
 he is a *libertine*: and in that word
 is summed up every thing that is
 base, vile, and despicable.—Hea-
 ven, which is all-sufficient, will
 protect the sweet innocent, I doubt
 not.—“ Why then (you say) these
 “ idle fears—this causeless anx-
 “ iety ?” —At present, however,
 the dear girl must go with me, as
 my poor good father (all conside-
 ration for her unprotected state) has
 written expressly to her the kindest
 invitation

invitation that ever was penned. Sophia has never seen my brother, and has only in general heard he has been, what this present *dissipated* age calls, a *little gay*.—Ah, were it no more than the mere *gaiety* of youth that I had to complain of, I should not waste the midnight hour in sighs and tears, for his horrid vices, so often as I do.—But I repeat, he cannot—will not *dare*—I cannot write it. Begone then ye idle fears—ye ridiculous apprehensions, formed through excess of affection for my angelic friend, I give you to the winds.

To-morrow I will finish this long epistle : at present it is necessary to give *you*, as well as myself, some little respite.

—* * * * * Thursday noon:

Sophia has fixed to leave Woodley Park on Saturday.—The patience of a *Job*, as she justly remarks, could not bear the insolence of the widow longer.—You will see us in town then very soon.—I long for you to *see*, and to *love* my poor friend.—Indeed the latter *must* be the consequence of the former.—She keeps up her spirits with amazing fortitude—this—this, my

Eliza,

Eliza, is true heroism:—to leave without a pang, affluence, ease and pomp—for certain dependance, and the thousand inconveniences of abject circumstances, is a triumph infinitely beyond, in my eyes, those of a Cæsar, or an Alexander.

I have been weeping for the poor, the friendless, and the aged, whom this angelic woman is to leave behind her. Alas! where will now the lisping infant find its wonted food and cloathing?—where the industrious labourer be supplied with the chearful fire—the wholesome meal, the reward of his daily toils?—In vain now will the

languid eye of sickness look up from its wretched bed of pain for its wonted relief—no more will the cold palsied hand of age be warmed with a reviving cordial! — the whole village of Woodley mourn their loss, and join in one general lamentation.

But it is now time to release you.—I must only add (as the friend who conveys this parcel to you sets out immediately, and will be in town to-morrow night) that I am my Eliza's most faithful,

And affectionate friend,

HARRIET GRANBY.

P. S. I have just been greatly affected.

fectcd. — Sophia had a brilliant ring, the gift of her god-mother, of considerable value.—This she has left with the rector of the parish, he informs me, (for she has never mentioned it to your Harriet) to be disposed of *secretly*, and the money raised from its sale, to be distributed as he shall think proper, among the sick and aged poor. What an *angel*!

☞ Our fair heroine being conducted to London, by her excellent friend, an interval of six months here passed, in which nothing remarkable occurred.—Miss Granby was happy to find her delicate

fears—her tender cares and scruples for her beloved Sophia on this account of her brother, were vain, and entirely unnecessary:—that gentleman, behaving to Miss Woodley, not only without the least degree of common admiration, but even often with apparent indifference, and declaring he was amazed at his sister's strange partiality for her, that Harriet only grieved she had ever suggested the least shadow of such a thought to her friend Miss Selwyn, who now being in the country, she, in one part of a letter to her, mentions the following paragraph:

“ I

“ I beseech you, my dear, Eliza, to burn instantly (if you have not done so already) that foolish letter of mine, in which I expressed *certain fears* to you, relative to my brother: I am indeed heartily ashamed, that I should ever have such of him, in *this* particular, *libertine* as he has been? for I think I never saw a more perfect indifference, than what he shews for my Sophia: — he has even affronted me on this subject, and hardly behaves to her with common civility. — Yesterday he had the downright rudeness to tell me, he never saw so insipid a being as

besetting

Miss

Miss Woodley;—a self-conceited prude—a piece of walking *still-life*; he called her:—in short, he perfectly abused my *taste*, in being what he calls, so *blindly* partial to her:—but since I last wrote to you my dear, I have another proof of his utter dislike to my Sophia, which I discovered by the following little incident:

My brother, in taking some tickets for the opera out of his pocket in my dressing room, he accidentally dropped a letter he had begun to his friend Sir Charles Blifil.—I picked it up the moment after his departure, and female curiosity prompted

prompted me to read the contents, which, I thank heaven, has perfectly set my heart at rest, in regard to his opinion of my fair friend.— After some other matters, he says, — “ Harriet, with her usual romantic flights of *sentimental* friendship, (thank ye brother thought I) still continues to make a most ridiculous fuss about the Miss Woodley I mentioned to you before; who is, without exception, one of the most formal—sanctified prudes in the kingdom, and I am much mistaken, if she is not a very *artful* girl.—I had heard much
 “ of

“ of her beauty; but, in good
 “ truth, was never more disap-
 “ pointed, when, instead of the
 “ fine face and figure I had been
 “ told she possessed, I saw nothing
 “ but the most *un*-animated fea-
 “ tures—goggling eyes (which
 “ you know I detest) a pale face,
 “ —a pair of long dangling arms,
 “ —a shape, aukward even to the
 “ last degree of stiffness:—in short,
 “ upon the whole, a very dis-
 “ agreeable, precise, formal figure;
 “ with a deal of self-conceit, and
 “ sentimental nonsense. — How
 “ much unlike is she in person,
 “ and manner, to *my* charming lit-
 “ tle

“ the rustic, and *your* Kitty?—

“ There is beauty! — there the

“ sparkling eye!—The heaving bo-

“ som, and blooming complexion

“ make the hearts of us, their fond

“ keepers, bound with pleasure—

“ but defend me from such a stalk-

“ ing pale - fac'd *thing* as this

“ Miss Woodley. — Lord help

“ these sentimental girls!—They

“ fancy they keep us wild fellows

“ (as they call us) at a distance by

“ their four faces, and forbidden

“ looks.—Ah, Charles, they little

“ know their sex, and that we can

“ have some of the finest girls in

“ the world, in this happy metro-

“ polis,

“ polis, for asking;—and cheap
 “ too—Dog cheap. You would
 “ die with laughing, Charles, to
 “ hear these two formal prudes,
 “ my *wise* sister, and this sanctified
 “ Miss Woodley, together:—then
 “ there is such lifting up of eyes,
 “ and hands, and shaking of heads
 “ when any little *gay* anecdote is
 “ mentioned in the polite world!
 “ —The horrid wickedness of this
 “ *sad* age,—and the *debauchery* of
 “ the *present* times, make them
 “ *shudder*; foolish minxes!—as if a
 “ man, a hundred years ago, did
 “ not love a pretty girl as well as
 “ we do.”

Much

Much more, my Eliza, of the same libertine stuff, does this brother of mine run on with; which through the tendency of it, with regard to the *morals* of the gay writer, was grievous to me to read, entirely set my fears at rest on my Sophia's account. I am, indeed, apt to think, that even the most profligate of men, may be kept at a proper distance, by a very *strict*, and forbidding air of *reserve*, on our parts.† I am now, my friend, inexpressibly pleased with my little discovery of my brother's so-

† The unsuspecting innocence of the heart of this amiable young lady, led her to make an observation not, in fact, always *true*.

vereign contempt for the lovely Sophia.—Her charms, you find, are too delicate—her behaviour too refined to touch so sensual, so gross a heart—long—long—lost to the finer feelings of sentiment.—The *sensual* beauties alone, you see, are beauties, in the eyes of these unhappy depraved men.—But no more of the odious subject.

I should be happy—happy, my friend, to an extreme, in my sweet Sophia's being an inhabitant under my roof, did I not evidently see, within these last two months, a melancholy about her, for which I cannot account.—She appears of-

ten

ten deeply lost in thought, and I frequently surprize her in tears.—She assures me, she is in perfect health;—she is continually pouring forth the effusions of her grateful soul, both to my excellent parent, and myself, for the few trifling civilities it has been in our power to shew her.—I rack my brain for the cause of this unaccountable melancholy, in which her whole soul seems deeply plunged.—I asked, last night, if she had fixed her *heart* where she thought she could meet with no return—as I am certain, should that be the source of her present disquietude, she

she should be extremely unhappy, as she has such excessive sensibility.

“ No, Harriet—no,—(she exclaimed with her usual air of sincerity) — I have not, I solemnly declare, seen the man whom I could prefer to another. —No—my hour is not yet come.”

I then most vehemently intreated her to disclose, to my faithful bosom, this “ worm of grief ” which so evidently preys on her heart.—“ Indeed (I added) my dear Sophia, it is evident to every one that sees you.—My poor father, I assure you, is quite wretched about you—and fears you have taken something amiss.”

“ Your father! (she exclaimed,
“ after looking at me tenderly for
“ some moments)—O Harriet, I
“ cannot—cannot disclose — may
“ your beloved father’s peace, and
“ yours, be never—O my heart—
“ gratitude forbids.”

She here burst into tears, and suddenly starting from me, rushed up stairs into her chamber.—I was astonished, absolutely lost in wonder.—“ Gratitude forbids!”—what can the dear, refined girl mean? she is so exalted in her every notion—so very—very different from the generality of the world, that what she has got in her head, heaven knows.

knows.—To day she did not come down to breakfast—being confined to her apartment with a violent head-ach, why will she not pour into my bosom her griefs?—But what griefs can they be?—*She*, who has so nobly been superior to the change of an adverse fortune—*She*, who can even smile at what the whole world deems misfortune and calamity—of what nature, I repeat, can these griefs be? This melancholy of hers, is surely the most unaccountable thing imaginable.—She most certainly is dissatisfied with her present situation—but *why* she is so, is the wonderful point :

point: I often observe her contemplating my dear parent, whom she perfectly idolizes, and shews the tenderest attention for his declining state, in a thousand little assiduities; I say, I frequently see the dear girl has a soft tear stealing down her languid cheek, on these occasions—and as often her fine eyes are cast to heaven, as if for assistance to implore its aid, in some trying circumstance of calamity.—She appears entirely absorbed in some *critical* affliction, as if she was debating *how* to extricate herself from it.—Whatever it is why this *reserve* to me?—it is absolutely *inex-*

plicable.—Well, my dear, I must hope *time* will soon unravel this mystery.

Thus far, on this subject, writes the worthy Harriet to her friend; whose astonishment I leave the reader to imagine, must be great, when the very next post she received the following letter.

Mrs. Martha Ward, to the Hon. Miss Selwyn.

London, May 20.

MADAM,

BY the command of my dear young lady, I take up my pen to inform you she is in the greatest grief and trouble, on account of Miss Woodley being gone, no one
can

can tell where.—To be sure it is the most surprising thing in the world. — I don't mean, madam, that she is gone off with any gentleman:—but she has left the house yesterday morning about eleven o'clock, and never returned, nor even been heard of since.—O my poor, dear young lady; she will run distracted; for she is sure, she says, she must (Miss Woodley I mean, pardon my bad writing and worse inditing) but she is sure she says, she must be *spirited* away, by some vile wretch, and, most likely, murdered. That she went by her entire own will is most certain;

for the butler, and Peter, both saw her walk down stairs, with a small parcel tied up in a pocket-handkerchief.—Poor Peter opened the door for her,—and thought she was going to take a walk, the morning being so fine. My young lady and my old master were just gone out on an airing in the chariot:— So then Miss Woodley watched her opportunity to depart.—To think such a lady should do so strange a thing!—Good God! for it *cannot* be with any reason in this world she could have to take such a step.—And indeed she was very *fly*, I must say, in the affair; for she told my

my

my young lady she had the head-ach, and did not choose to take an airing;—but, as the old saying is, where there is a will there is a way. But to go on with the sad story.

About two o'clock my lady returned, and ran up stairs, as usual, into Miss Woodley's apartment.—Her surprize was great not to find her;—but when night arrived, she was quite like a distracted thing.—My poor old master sat in such concern—for he loved her as his own child—that Peter says it would have grieved a heart of stone to have seen him.—He said he would pawn his life she was gone

on no dishonourable errand;—
 Peter says, that during a full hour,
 at tea time, my poor lady's brother
 (if he may deserve that title, for to
 be sure he is a sad wicked gentle-
 man) did nothing but *aggravate*
 her affliction—*egging* and teizing,
 and laughing at her.

At last, said he, “ So, Harriet,
 “ your fine *sentimental* (I think
 “ the word was) your sweet Miss
 “ Woodley has played you a fine
 “ trick. — She is an artful, fly
 “ huffey—I saw it from the be-
 “ ginning.—What ingratitude—
 “ What a shameful behaviour to
 “ leave the house in this manner!

—“ Ah,

“ —Ah, poor Harriet ! what are
 “ you left in the lurch by your
 “ angelic friend ? Perhaps you
 “ will find her at the tabernacle
 “ in Moorfields, for I take it she
 “ has all the marks of a true mo-
 “ dern faint.”

In this wicked manner did the
 sad gentleman run on, whenever
 my old master was out of the
 room.—But to proceed.

The servants were dispatched
 into various parts of the town,
 among all my lady's friends, to
 know if they could give any ti-
 dings of Miss Woodley ; and about
 ten at night, our coachman came

back with a most dreadful story indeed. He said, that a young lady had been seen that day at noon drest in a chintz night-gown, and pink fatin coat, (which was, madam, the same dress Miss Woodley *eloped* in) some time walking by the side of the canal in the Park, in a melancholy mood, and at length flung herself in, and was taken up *dead*. This dreadful account I thought indeed would have killed my poor dear young lady quite out-right—she fell into violent hysterics :—for you know, madam, there was no *common* friendship between the ladies.

In

In short, we had quite a distracted house.—My master sent away for a physician to his dear daughter :—and she was bled. About an hour after, near midnight, our milliner, who lives in our street, came to inform us that some of her young women are very certain, and would even take their corporal oath, that they saw Miss Woodley at noon, (for they know her well) get into a post-chaise and four, with a very fine young gentleman, all over gold lace, and that they drove off like lightning. This account staggered us ; but my poor dear lady would not believe one single word

of it ; but, wringing her hands, she cried, “ No—no—it could
 “ not—cannot be my Sophia that
 “ is gone off with any man :—no,
 “ no, she is dead—dead !”

Her brother just then came into her apartment—and, wicked gentleman as he is, what do you think, madam, he did ? He took a bible, (a book he seldom opens) and found out Saul’s lamentation over Jonathan, which he put into my lady’s hands—telling her cruelly, she had better, if she must be in *heroics*, make use of that doleful lamentation.

In the midst of all our hurley-
 burley,

burley, my old master came in (O he is a good gentleman) and told us Miss Woodley must certainly have left a letter or billet behind her somewhere, and that we had better search every place in her apartment for it. To be sure this was a wise thought—but it never once had entered our minds—for we had all been running about like mad things the whole day:—however, all the servants, with me at their head, now marched into Miss Woodley's apartment, where we searched every creek and corner—but nothing could we find. I begun then to think she had gone

off in a fit of despair, and that she had *drowned* herself in good earnest; but just as we were all coming out of the room with our dismal faces, little Dolly, the under housemaid, discovered a paper folded up in one of the drawers of the small ebony cabinet, which you, madam, must remember. I snatched it out, and found it was a billet indeed from Miss Woodley to her dear friend.—We ran with it overjoyed to my poor lady, who being raised up in her bed, read the following letter.

Sophia

Sophia Woodley, to Miss Granby.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

WITH a heart bleeding for the fatal necessity of my being *obliged* to take a step so repugnant to every appearance of gratitude and friendship, as that of leaving your hospital roof, and the kind assylum your dear, and revered parent has given to a poor unfriended orphan; I take up my pen, to conjure you, my most beloved sister of my heart, to believe that death would be even preferable to the cruel anguish I endure in tearing myself from you.—*Honour,*
commands

commands my so doing, — whilst *gratitude* compels me to be silent. — To disclose the cause for my being absolutely compelled to take this rash, — this desperate step — would be to wound — to plant a dagger in the bosoms of those I best love: — need I say, those are your excellent father, and my beloved Harriet? — Such is the strange peculiarity of my affliction, that, from a principle of *generosity*, I must be silent: — the same principle compels me to quit all I hold most dear. — Pity me, my Harriet — but weep *not* for me: — your Sophia, I trust, will be the care of providence

providence.—When I am settled in some safe retreat—far—far from the metropolis, I will instantly inform you. — Banish me not, my Harriet, from your memory;—and be assured that to render myself *worthy* your invaluable affection,—to be *honourable*,—*generous*, *virtuous*, I tear myself from you, with agonies to which I should prefer even those of death. May the Almighty bless and preserve your honoured parent, and yourself, my inexpressibly dear friend; and with every possible sentiment the most grateful heart can dictate, for all the unmerited goodness I have received

ceived ; I remain (whatever may be
my future condition of misery)
your equally obliged,

And tenderly affectionate,

SOPHIA WOODLEY.

Martha Ward in Continuation.

This letter, madam, afforded my
dear lady some relief, as it infor-
med her she would soon have far-
ther information of her friend: but
on the other hand, it threw her into
the utmost perplexity, to account for
those *strange* hints given, that “ to
“ be *honourable, generous and virtu-*
“ *ous*; it was *necessary* to take this
“ rash step.”

To be sure, madam, it is a most

un-accountable affair: and why my lady (such friends as they were) should not be *entrusted* with the secret, don't, in my poor opinion, redound very much to the praise of Miss Woodley. However, my lady held the letter to her bosom, in a sort of transport, to think she should hear from her again; and, with her eyes lifted up to heaven, she exclaimed, "Ye angels, ye gracious powers, guard and protect this poor innocent—make her your choicest cares!" She dropped a tear—and soon after, holding still the letter in her hand, fell into a little slumber; her poor spirits having

ing

ing been quite worn out with what she had endured.

Being now rather more composed, though not able herself to write, she ordered me to take the pen, and give as good an account as I could of this very strange—unaccountable matter. To be sure, though Miss Woodley has been a very good lady to *me*, yet I must say, appearances are very much *against* her.—But I am only a servant, and ought not to give my poor opinion either way, and so, madam, begging your pardon for my bad writing, and my hasty manner

manner of expressing this affair,
I remain your most humble,
and obedient servant to command,

MARTHA WARD.

P. S. My lady bid me say she
will write herself very soon.

☞ As the reader, may possibly
here breath a sigh for the poor,
unfriended Sophia now flung on
the wide world; to relieve an anx-
iety, and to account for a conduct
so seemingly *mysterious*, the editor
presents the following letter,
which the fair fugitive wrote to
her good old friend Mrs. Harris,
a lady before-mentioned, who had
resided with her at Woodley Park.

This

This letter was written immediately on her arrival at a small village, about two hundred miles from London, in the county of Devon, where she had conveyed herself in the first stage-coach to thence, after her departure from her friends roof. The letter is given here, as it helps to explain the cause of the late perplexing enigma.

L E T T E R VIII.

Miss Sophia Woodley, to Mrs. Harris.

From a Cottage in Devonshire, May 31.

My dear maternal Friend,

THE uncertainty of the advantages of this world, or its pleasures,

pleasures, I believe few young persons have experienced more than myself. You will think this assertion of mine still more strongly verified, when I inform you, I am no longer in the splendid apartment I described to you, on my arrival in London with my excellent friend Miss Granby, in Hanover square, surrounded with pomp, with a variety of servants, and under the protection of the best of men, her worthy father: no, no, my good Mrs. Harris, times are indeed changed with me, owing to a strange fatality I must call it.

I write this from a wretched
cottage

cottage (the owners of which are however good and honest) in a most obscure village in the lower part of Devonshire. But not to keep my revered friend a moment longer in suspense, know then that I have, in order to preserve my innocence, been obliged to take a step which nothing but that most important *reason* can justify. We ought ever to prefer *poverty* to *shame*, and the most *bitter distress* to *vicious pomp*. Alas! my friend, how shall I tell you, that I have been obliged to fly from the house of my sweet Harriet, and *that*, with every appearance of rashness of ingratitude?

for

for oh, my friend, I could not divulge the horrid cause, without wounding the best of fathers, and the most faithful of friends. But to the point.

I had not been three days with my beloved Harriet, before her brother, who, it seems, is the most abandoned, the most profligate of men, made a declaration secretly of love; and that in terms the most violent imaginable! I thought even then (though heaven knows I little suspected his shocking intention to be what it afterwards proved) that there was a certain levity in

in his behaviour which I could by no means reconcile to the *respect* of a *virtuous* passion.

As I never saw, on every account, a more disagreeable man, he was particularly disgusting, I may add, even hateful to me, and I gave the most absolute denial to his addresses in the strongest terms.

My very cold behaviour availed not: he still continued to write letters, and to take all opportunities of speaking to me, in the absence of my Harriet, of the violence of his passion, before whom I observed he always behaved with apparent
in-

indifference *. This I own greatly surprised me: I began to fear I knew not what. As the man was so perfectly disgusting to me, and as I was firmly resolved not to listen to him, I never mentioned a syllable on the subject to my Harriet; thinking it most prudent to let the matter die in oblivion. But he still persisted, and proposed to fly with me into Scotland, and then, after marriage *there*, to France.

At length, on my obstinate re-

* Hence arose this wretched man's scheme of writing the letter he *purposely* dropt in the apartment of his innocent sister. In truth, he had *marked* the beautiful Sophia for his prey from the first moment he saw her.

jection of the above ridiculous schemes, which I easily saw were merely proposed just to palliate his vile views, and which, from his behaviour, were very obvious to me, though not to his family; he had the unparalleled audacity twice to conceal himself in my bed-chamber, and where, O my friend, but for the immediate interposition of heaven, I must have been inevitably ruined: but that heaven, whose chiefest care is the helpless orphan, preserved my innocence. My indignation, my rage, was so great at this daring insult, that I (not able to endure his hated presence

(sence

fence) confined myself to my apartment for above a week, under pretence of indisposition: and from that time the desperate thought of leaving the house (without afflicting his noble father and amiable sister with the horrid discovery) took entire possession of my soul. A month however I remained longer in the most dreadful dilemma how to act. To disclose the secret would have given the most poignant anguish to the bosom of the best of men, the excellent parent of my Harriet: and to her gentle heart (the seat of tender pity) an insult of the kind offered to her

friend would have been almost death.

Whilst my soul was harrowed up with the strongest conflict of contending passions, the evening before my actual departure, I made a discovery which drove me almost frantic. By what simple little incidents (as they appear to us) does the supreme author of events direct our steps ! But for the following accident, I had been at this moment in a state of distraction and of horror, at which my soul shudders.

A canary bird, of which my Harriet was very fond, had escaped from its cage : I ran after it, and the fugitive bent its course (hea-

ven directed) into the gallery, out of which a door opens into the library, and instantly I espied a pocket-book, as if dropped by accident. A sudden impulse seized me to take it up, for I had seen this very book in the hands often of the infamous young Granby, and imagined it might lead by its contents (for I should say I saw a note stuck in its leaves) to some certain discovery. I was not deceived in my conjecture. But, good heavens! what was my terror, when I saw a billet addressed to a certain French physician (his associate in his odious vices) in these words!

“ Nothing can be done, I find,
“ with this proud minx, but by the
“ *method* we talked of yesterday :
“ send me therefore, carefully
“ sealed up, the powder you men-
“ tioned, but previous to my ad-
“ ministering it, she must be car-
“ ried off. To-morrow, some
“ time in the afternoon, if I find
“ the stage clear, I will bring her
“ to your house. Prepare an a-
“ partment, but *not* to the *street*.
“ I have laid a plot to get her out
“ of the house as follows : The
“ old man and Harriet go out
“ every morning on an airing. *He*
“ shall be taken suddenly ill, in
“ that

“ that airing (you *understand* me)
 “ and a chair shall be sent to carry
 “ this obstinate girl to their assist-
 “ ance. You see *this* will do. By
 “ all the powers of love, she shall
 “ not now escape me. The *quan-*
 “ *tity* on this occasion (of what I
 “ write for) I leave to your known
 “ judgment.—No signature is ne-
 “ cessary. Adieu.”

I am amazed, my friend, I pre-
 served my senses on reading this
 horrid note. I spent a night, bor-
 dering on distraction.—But not to
 dwell on this dreadful period, suf-
 fice it to say, the instant my Harriet
 and her excellent parent set out on

their usual airing, with hasty steps, at the hour of ten in the morning, after imploring, in most fervent terms, the succour of heaven, I walked down stairs as if I trod on air. I met one of the servants in the passage, but still walked on, and gained the street. A small parcel tied up in a Cambrick handkerchief, led the above-mentioned servant, who had opened the door for me, to imagine, I suppose, I might be stepping to the milliners. I got into the first hackney-coach I saw, and ordered it to an inn in the city, from whence I had accidentally heard the coaches set out for Devonshire.

vonshire. My God! When I look back, how critically was I saved from ruin! I locked myself into a private room in the inn, till the hour arrived in which the coach was to set out. Luckily I had agreeable people in it; and, thank heaven, arrived at Exeter in two days: my mind, with regard to the opinion of my beloved Harriet, and her revered parent, in a situation of anguish, which beggars all description. Chusing not to remain in Exeter, I proceeded still farther westward many miles, and at length arrived at this small peaceful village, and procured a lodging, with

hatched some simple peasants, in a straw-roofed cottage.

Here, methinks, my kind friend, you ask, “Why did I not at once “make your peaceful abode my re-
“fidence, till this matter was
“blown over?” I will honestly confess, that as long as I have health, ingenuity and strength, I will not—*cannot* be a burthen to my friend. What! Shall I add to the distresses of the straitened fortune, under which the best of women has so long laboured, by the *unnecessary* expence I must occasion by *adding* to her family?—
No, forbid it, *generosity*; forbid it,

in-

industry !—I have hands which scorn not to ply the needle for my support :—I have a mind, I hope, superior to my wretched fortune : I shall be the care of heaven, I doubt not.—Bestow not, therefore, my worthy woman, a thought about me. I am determined, at all events, (*start* not my friend) to get into some family as an humble attendant ; for which purpose I have bought a decent stuff gown, a round-eared cap, with linen, coarse and plain ; a little straw hat without ornament ; and, in short, whatever is necessary for the apparel of a young person going to service. I

have just been sacrificing to my *scissars*, those locks of hair which have so long been dressed in the highest mode. My head is indeed now divested of all its ringlets, and reduced into as decent a size, as that of any farmer's daughter in the parish; and my name is no longer *Sophia Woodley*, but *Polly Martin*. This change, I think, is necessary; as I have no doubt but that the vilest of men will use his utmost efforts to find out the place of my retreat.

It was an unfortunate circumstance that I could bring no apparel of any kind with me, but what I

wore

wore at the time, which was much too elegant for my *present* station: my watch, however, and a few trinkets I have; and I brought about twenty guineas in my pocket; but the expences of so long a journey, joined with the purchase of my new habiliments, have sunk pretty considerably into my stock of finances; so that you see, my friend, it is absolutely necessary I should *do* something for my future support.

Adieu—be under no concern about me; for whilst I place my whole confidence in the supreme disposer of events, I never can be

un-

unhappy. Oh! my dear Mrs. Harris, I have still a father, still a friend, though destitute of earthly protection. Believe me, in all situations,
Most faithfully yours,

SOPHIA WOODLEY.

Direct to Mrs. Polly Martin, at Goodman Plowden's, near the Three Pidgeons, Highwood, Devonshire.

Our fair *heroine* (for most truly she merits that appellation) also wrote, by the same post, to her Harriet, to inform her of her safety, &c. but still informed her the *reasons* of her unavoidable *flight* must remain for ever *untold*. She begged

begged to hear from her by the before-recited direction ; most earnestly conjuring her not to divulge the route she took, or the place of her concealment to any one human being ; “ for on that absolute secrecy,” she added, “ depends my *happiness or misery in this world.*”

The lovely Sophia soon, by the help of the worthy little family where she lodged, was recommended to a service, in that neighbourhood, perfectly agreeable to her in all respects ; of which she gives her friend an account in her next epistle.

LETTER IX.

Miss Sophia Woodley, to Miss Harriet Granby.

From a Cottage in High-wood Dale,

July 20.

O MY Harriet ! The pleasure of descending with *ease*, from pomp, from gilded roofs, and from the *tumult* of the great world, to the peaceful cottage, the quiet slumbers, and the homely, but wholesome board, which attends a life of humble industry ! I am still in the little cottage I mentioned in my last letter ; but am on the point of *pre-ferment*, my dear, (congratulate me I beg) of being advanced into a very respectable, worthy family, in this neighbourhood, by the help of my

good

good dame Plowden, where I lodge.
On Monday next I am to go on *trial*
to my *place*; of which I shall give
you a farther account before I seal
this letter. At present, however,
I can tell you, I am not to be an
Abigail to a fine lady, nor a house-
keeper in the family of a nobleman:
my sphere will be no higher than
that of an assistant, or head servant,
to the wife of a most respectable
Yeoman; a man so rich, that he
could buy half our *petty squires* in
many other parts of England; and,
in fact, would be, by his domestics,
termed a *squire*, if he had the am-
bition to be thought any thing
higher

higher in life than a *plain, honest* man. The neighbouring poor, to whom he is the common father and friend, can best speak his praise.

I am enchanted with both him and his amiable wife, who is many years younger than himself, and the mother of several little children, who are partly to be my care.

This lovely woman (for such she truly is) accepted me on the recommendation of my dame ; and without distressing me with a number of useless, impertinent questions, told me she was very willing to take me on trial. In the mean time, I am endeavouring to make myself
useful

useful to the good woman where I now am : I have been learning to spin ; and, I assure you, can handle the distaff very readily. I am now *knitting* a pair of yarn stockings for Gaffer Plowden, with whom I am delighted : I am trying likewise (in secret) to practise the use of the broom ; to make a pie and a pudding. To be sure, I do not excel in the province of *pastry* (for I confess my hand is a little *out*) but I am willing to learn, willing to render myself of service to my new mistress. And what, my Harriet, does it signify ? Of what importance is it, whether I am surrounded
in

in a crouded assembly of beaus and belles, stifled with heat, and pestered with nonsense, or whether I am knitting old Gaffer Plowden's stockings? In good truth, my Harriet, I could not only be easy, but happy here, were it not for the *cruel*, but *necessary* distance, which separates me from the inexpressibly dear, and beloved friend of my heart: for *myself* I feel not; but for the anguish I must have occasioned to the gentle heart of my Harriet, there, there's the pang.

I cannot enough admire that nobleness of sentiment you express in your truly affectionate letter, which

now

now lays before me, and which I have been weeping over.

How nobly kind is that sentiment of yours, in which you tell me, “you will *not* press me to reveal the *cause* of my abrupt flight, satisfied that it was the result of some virtuous distress.”

Those are your words. Yes, my sweet friend, my flight was indeed the consequence of what you so delicately express; though that flight, that seemingly rash departure from my beloved Harriet, may appear to others as the action of phrenzy. But would any *woman's* curiosity but *yours* be so easily satisfied?

You

You sacrifice that passion, so predominant in our sex, to your confidence in my having acted with propriety. In this you give me a proof of your *high opinion*, infinitely superior to a thousand *professions* of affection. These little secret kindnesses of the heart are most dear and valuable, one feels them sensibly : and the more so, as the kind donor does not seem to put them on the score of gratitude.

But I forget, whilst I am scribbling to my incomparable friend, that I have a small task to finish at my spinning-wheel, which my good dame must carry to the market-

ket-town to-morrow. The excellent woman this moment calls me down to partake of her wholesome supper of brown bread, curds and cream. You would be delighted to see us at our meals. The old man, who is simplicity, and honesty itself, pays me no small attention, often saying, "I ask no questions, Mrs. Polly: cross'd in love, I suppose, but mum for that." Whilst the good woman sighs, and looks upon me even with maternal affection; as she says I am the very *image* of her poor daughter Prue. But I am again summoned to the little homely board.

Ah !

Ah! my dear, I am now fully convinced, that real contentment, and sweet peace, are the never-failing companions of chearful industry. When I go to my place I will finish this—till then, adieu.

Wednesday.

AT length, my Harriet, I am commenced a chearful domestic, in the large; old hospitable mansion of Yeoman Hill. I feel I shall love my sweet mistress extremely: there is an enchanting innocence in her manner; and I have taken it in my head, that she has the eyes and the *smile* of my Harriet: can you then wonder at my affection for this lovely

lovely young woman? What a rout among our London beaux and belles would such a fine figure as hers exhibit, when sparkling with jewels in the front box, or in the drawing-room! Her artless beauties, however, please *me* better in a callico night-gown, and plain linen, than if she was labouring under (like our *modern* fine ladies) a load of tinsel, and other tawdry, useless ornaments. To use an expression of Thompson, she is,

“When unadorned—then adorned most.”

This amiable person, though not much older than myself, is the mother of three beautiful children,

the eldest not four years old, who are to be partly my care: indeed my situation here will be as easy as agreeable; I being little more than a sort of assistant to my kind mistress in the management of her large household; as even the day-labourers are fed from their benevolent table. Harriet, should you not smile to see me making half a dozen plumb puddings, and as many mutton pies every day? But I set about my business with great alacrity, as the poor, employed in this very large and wealthy family, partake in common their food with the house servants: you know I

am

am pretty expert at my needle, in which also my assistance is required.

Having now, as I think told you the whole of my employment, had I a talent at description, I would endeavour to set forth the beautiful situation of this old mansion, to which is annexed a yearly profit of a farm of six hundred pounds a year, all which, and much more, the beneficent landlord (my master) spends in hospitality, and in various branches of agriculture, which employ, for miles round, the poor of all ages. When I survey the immense flocks of sheep, the low-

ing herds, and the spacious orchards, with their rich and loaded trees (as at this season) bending even under their precious stock of ripened fruit, I fancy myself in the habitation of some of the rich old patriarchs of yore. I cannot conceive a more pleasing sight, than my worthy master, seated at the upper end of an ancient shining oaken table, surrounded by perhaps thirty poor labourers, whom he never fails, each evening, to reward, for their daily toil, by constantly paying them in the above described situation. He observes, most strictly, that divine maxim

of

of holy writ, "thou shalt not
"sleep with the wages of an hire-
"ling." Those who have borne
the labours of the day, with most
affiduity (for he constantly inspects
them himself) are plentifully re-
warded with an overplus for their
families; whilst those, who have
been idle or neglectful, are dis-
missed with a gentle rebuke. Ah!
my Harriet, if some of our *landed*
gentlemen lived on their estates,
the year round, instead of flying to
the idle watering places in sum-
mer, and the gaming tables in our
gay metropolis, in winter, of what
infinite service would they be to

their fellow creatures! they would then *feel* the extatic joy of feeding the lisping infant, as well as comforting the palsied hand of the aged. For my part, I can conceive no character more respectable than that of an honest country gentleman, *residing* on his estate, and giving bread to the industrious poor all around him, by the improvement of his lands in every branch of agriculture.

Write to me, my beloved friend, as soon as possible. What a refined delight shall I enjoy, after a day spent in virtuous industry, to have a letter from my Harriet! Her affection

fection will soften every care, and make even labour smile. Let me conjure you not to bestow an anxious thought on your Sophia, she is *happy*, because *virtuous*: and be assured, had I remained in London, the reverse, with distraction, and misery unequalled, *must* have been the certain consequence.

Say every thing, my dear, to your revered your excellent parent from me which affection and gratitude can dictate. May it please the dispenser of all goodness to restore him to health and happiness. Farewell: I need not, I trust, assure you, with what impatience

I shall long for a letter from my
inestimable friend, whose I am,
and ever shall remain,

Most unalterably,

SOPHIA WOODLEY.

P. S. Direct to Mrs. Mary
Martin, at the Elms (for so is
this ancient mansion called) in the
parish of High-wood, Devon.

Our fair heroine being now
in safe and honourable hands, we
shall omit the letters which passed,
for a twelvemonth following, be-
twixt her and her valuable friend,
as nothing material in that time
occurred. Sophia was the delight
of all the worthy family where
she

she lived, and of all who knew her : and though the noble-minded Harriet continually pressed her to accept of a pension for life, and no longer to remain in a state of servitude, yet could she not prevail with the admirable girl to accept it, to be a burden to her friends, “ whilst,” as she added, “ I have health, youth, and strength, to earn a livelihood, “ by virtuous industry.”

About this period the health of Miss Granby’s excellent father growing worse, his physicians ordered him to try the salutary air of Lisbon ; at which place, the good

old gentleman, his amiable daughter, and her profligate brother, were now arrived. The letters previous, however, to the following one from Miss Woodley are omitted, as by no means material to the main design of our history. Many had passed, since the arrival of the family at Lisbon, but the next epistle we select is necessary for the reader to be acquainted with, if desirous of knowing what pained or pleased the gentle bosom of our lovely fugitive.

LETTER

LETTER X.

Miss Sophia Woodley, to Miss Harriet Granby.

Sept. 20.

HARRIET, my dearest Harriet, at length my *hour* is certainly come : that hour in which my yet *unfeeling* heart, which has hitherto defied the little formidable deity and all his arts, is *pierced*—*wounded* to its very centre. The above urchin, as if in revenge for my having so long remained invulnerable to his attacks, now indeed is making ample reprisals ; and, what is worse, I certainly must repair to the next willow tree, or to the inviting pond in our farm yard,

to rid me, at once, of my hopeless passion and miseries together : for, alas ! alas ! it is utterly impossible for me ever to think of obtaining this angelic—what shall I call him? Who, in one hour, has so miserably hacked and hewed my poor little heart to pieces.

“ Is the girl mad ? (you cry)
 “ What, is it the grave, the senti-
 “ mental Sophia, who is running
 “ on in this wild manner of a hea-
 “ then deity and wounded hearts ? ”

Yes, my Harriet, in serious sadness (raillery apart) I have seen *such* a man ! I feel, alas ! I never *can* love another. “ Can, then, a *look*

“ create

“ create a thought (you ask) which
 “ time can ne’er remove !” Too
 surely so, I fear : and your predic-
 tion, my friend, is now fully veri-
 fied, that when I *did* love, it would
 be with extreme sensibility.

“ But who, or what (you ask)
 “ is this paragon, this Adonis ? Is
 “ he the squire of the neighbour-
 “ ing hamlet, or the *ruddy-cheeked*
 “ son of some wealthy yeoman in
 “ the parish of High-wood ? Or,
 “ possibly, the humble graces of
 “ the shepherd of the snowy flock
 “ *may* have wrought this mis-
 “ chief.”

(189) No, no, my Harriet, neither the
 squire,

squire, Colin of the village, nor the artless shepherd of the plain, has made the least impression on your friend: it is, it is—but in order to proceed progressively to this most wonderful conquest, it will be necessary to tell you the whole adventure of my accidentally encountering this very amiable man.

Know then, that about a week since, as my ill stars would have it, I strolled, one afternoon, with my lovely little charge (to wit, two beautiful girls of three and four years old, and a boy of five) to amuse ourselves, with what is at this season (the autumn of the year)

a great

a great diversion in this county, called *nutting* : for which purpose I had provided myself with a nut-hook, and bags, and had already, from the neighbouring copses, got abundance of filberts : but the day being remarkably fine, and my little companions delighted with their amusement, I still walked on, till I had strolled, as near as I could guess, about three miles from home, in a situation equally romantic, and beautiful, and which I had never before seen. As it was some hours before evening, I was under no kind of apprehensions of being *lost*. On my right hand I descried a fine
boow park,

park, near the gates of which we now were, with a magnificent seat at the end of a grand avenue of oaks. To the left, was a river, winding among some fertile meadows which were full of herds. These together exhibited a beautiful picture. A hanging wood, at the foot of which were some thick and verdant copses, full of hazel and filbert trees, invited my steps to pursue among them our amusement of *nutting*. But in order to gain access to these copses, the adventure seemed perilous; as there was a very high stile to climb, which led from the park to the
wood.

wood. Over this stile I had lifted two of the children, when my little boy espied a stag in the park who was making towards him, on which he began crying. His sisters, because he cried, did so too. Whilst I was in the midst of these calamities (none however of much consequence). and was endeavouring in vain to climb the stile, a form appeared; but, ah my friend, *such* a form! To be brief, a young man, lovely to excess, stepped forth from the neighbouring thicket. He ran to the stile, on which I was trembling, and with the utmost civility, begged I would give him
leave

leave to assist me. As I was then mounted on the high stile before-mentioned, and from which I could not descend without help, I looked, I suppose, foolish enough, when this obliging stranger, taking me gently in his arms, lifted me down. I blushed extremely, and, to say truth, he appeared, I know not why, in as much confusion as myself. I concluded he was one of the head domestics belonging to the fine seat in the park before me. His dress was very plain, but perfectly neat: his fine dark hair dishevelled, whilst a small round hat in the action of lifting me from the

the

the stile, had fallen off, and discovered the whole of a countenance infinitely handsome. There was besides, an air of sense and sweetness diffused through his fine face, which it is utterly impossible for me to *describe*; and, to confess the truth, as difficult for me ever to *forget*. Such eyes! Harriet—such a figure!—But to proceed.

My little companions having informed him that we were out upon a nutting-scheme, he conducted us through a small delightful grove to an adjoining copse, and with most obliging assiduity, from the

loaded

loaded boughs, soon enriched our spoils. He seemed greatly pleased with my little companions, and talked much more to them than to myself: he *eyed* me, however, with a kind of respectful attention, which threw me into an awkward confusion.

Whilst I was adjusting the head-dresses of the little girls, which in play had fallen off, this kind stranger sat himself down on the grass at the foot of an hazel tree, and taking the little boy on his knee, began asking his name: and presently turning to me with a diffidence in his manner; “pray

“ ma-

“madam,” said he, “are you
“the *mother* of these little ones?”
fixing his fine eyes earnestly on
mine at the time.

“No, Sir,” I replied blushing,
“I am only—only a servant.”

Ah, my dear Harriet, what did
my *pride* suffer at that moment!
A proof with me that I am by no
means sufficiently *humbled* with my
fortunes. When I pronounced the
word *servant*, I sighed involun-
tarily. He cast his eyes down,
bowed, and looked grave for a few
moments. He again began play-
ing with the children; and assist-
ing me in filling our bags with the
very

very large spoils he had procured us. But ah ! my friend, how shall I describe my astonishment, when a servant out of livery, who had seen us from the park, hastened to the spot where we were, and bowing low to our courteous gentleman, addressed him in those words :
 “ My lord, Sir Thomas Gordon
 “ is come to wait on your lord-
 “ ship.”

Harriet, you have seen the Statue of *Surprize* : you have seen the inimitable *Garrick* in *Hamlet*, you have seen him stand aghast with astonishment at the sight of his father's ghost ; but do not imagine
 you

you have seen any thing to compare to the amazement of your friend, in the moment she found it was lord Belford himself, who had so kindly assisted her.

His lordship told his servant he was coming : but turning to me with infinite grace, desired I would take my little companions to Belford hall, to refresh them with some tea, cakes, &c. I, blushing, begged to be excused, as I feared the evening would draw on. “ Well
 “ (said he with great politeness)
 “ give me at least leave to order
 “ some refreshment in this retreat :
 “ Go, Lecour, (to his servant)
 “ order

“ order the house keeper to send
“ some sweet-meats, wine, and
“ cakes hither. I know,” addressing himself to me, “ I know
“ the worthy father of these pretty
“ children well (for I had now acquainted him whose they were)
“ and pray inform him, that I
“ shall call upon him in a few
“ days, about the business he
“ knows of.”

I curtsied low; but was hardly able to stand, so great was my wonder: I must undoubtedly have made the most foolish figure imaginable.

To be brief; he rose from the bank on which he had been sitting,
and

and tenderly kissing the children, bowing to me with as much respect as if I had been the first dutchess in the land, and with a look of expression in his fine eyes, which pierced my soul, he left us.

I stood a few moments lost in a kind of stupid amazement ;—and could not help stealing a last look at his elegant figure as he walked down the avenue ;—when, to my surprise, I saw him frequently turn his head to the spot where we stood. Soon after a servant arrived with a most choice repast of fruits, sweetmeats, &c. and to compleat my astonishment, a chariot now appeared to conduct the *children* back (the servant said) as the evening was drawing on—and to make short of this adventure, we went home in the chariot as his lordship had directed.

My sweet mistress was equally pleased and astonished when she saw the carriage drive into the yard. —I gave her a very full account of

all that had passed, and of Lord Belford's civility.

“ Ah, blessings on him. ! ” — she exclaimed — “ There is not “ such another nobleman in the world. — So young too ! — but just returned from his travels : — and instead of following the vices of the age, is a pattern of every virtue. — “ Why, Polly, ” — she continued to me — “ I love him as if “ he was my own brother ; — nay, “ he is my foster-brother, for my “ mother had the *great* honour of “ suckling his lordship. — I have “ not seen him since he came from “ France : — before he went, he “ often used to call upon us, — for “ my husband is steward to his “ Somersetshire estate. — Ah, he is “ a sweet gentleman ! — Tommy, ” said the dear woman, turning to the little boy, “ I hope you made “ your best bow to his lordship — “ and you, Patty, your finest “ curtsy. ”

Thus did the worthy creature

run

run on in the joy of her heart ;—
not a little proud that the children
had been sent home in the chariot.

I retired to my little garret rather sooner than usual, and felt an uncommon melancholy at my heart :—I sighed, I knew not why ; and, for the first time in my life, experienced a sadness—a dejection on my spirits, which no former stroke of fate, or adverse change of fortune, had ever occasioned. I was inly vexed, so strange and unaccountable is the human mind, that this very agreeable man was *a lord* ;—as if, had he *not* been so, he might probably—ah, Harriet—how flattering—how deceitful is the heart !—I took mine, however, very severely to task.—Wretch that I am, said I to myself, what are the virtues—the graces—or the fine form of this young nobleman to the poor Sophia ?—Had I been still the wealthy heiress of Woodley Park, surrounded as I was there with pomp and every elegance, I

K 2

might

might perhaps have *hoped* for—ah !
 What would I say ?—But now—
 the *servant*, the lowly *handmaid*
 of his steward's wife, how dare I—
 O heaven shield me from the mi-
 series of a hopeless love !—Surely
 I had calamities enough to struggle
 with, divested from the additional
 torment of an un-requited passion.

In these sad kind of exclama-
 tions did I pass a sleepless night.—
 To add to my perplexities, I fan-
 cied—but cannot recollect *where*—
 that I have seen this most amiable
 man before : — but whether in
 town or country, I have not the
 least idea.—Perhaps at some public
 place. — Dress, you know, my
 dear, makes a wonderful altera-
 tion :—and now I think of it, he
 surveyed me yesterday with that
 kind of earnest attention, which is
 usual when we are recollecting a
 former acquaintance. Pray hea-
 ven, however, he may not remem-
 ber me in any other character than
 that in which I am : as the con-
 trary

trary might lead to a discovery I shudder but to think of.

Preparations are making in our parlour for the expected visit of this worthy young nobleman. I catch myself, Harriet, continually calling Lord Belford, "*this* amiable, *this* worthy, *this* agreeable" man, as if there were no other "so." Ah! my friend, you will pity, you will allow for these little inadvertent strokes of nature, in a heart so unexperienced as mine in the tender passion. I pray heaven I may not be in the house when his lordship calls here. I felt a pleasure in preparing the room for him which I cannot express.—I have placed flower-pots in the windows, and ornamented the chimney-piece with some devices in shell-work of my own performance. My indulgent mistress often tells me I ought to have been a *lady*, as I have so much the qualifications of one; her own expression remember.

Adieu my sweet friend, I have luckily heard of a person from hence going to Plymouth, who will put this on board the first packet which sails for Lisbon. Oh for one of Mahomet's pidgeons to convey this to you, and to bring me back an answer from my Harriet!—In the present perplexity of my soul, I am almost tempted to cry out with Athenais,

“Ye cruel powers, who made no cure for love!

Believe me, in all situations, however,

most sincerely your's,

SOPHIA WOODLEY.

LETTER XI.

Lord Belford, to Henry Villars, Esq.

Belford Hall, Sept.

YOU would have heard from me sooner, my friend, but a multitude of affairs have occurred, since my arrival here, that have engrossed my whole thoughts and time :

time : and ah ! my Villars, such an adventure has happened ! But more of this, when I have answered your question relative to what I intend to do about the increase of the rents of my principal farms, in this county. So far from increasing them, I shall remit to every tenant the advanced rent upon his farm, in consequence of the present greatly reduced value of the produce of lands ; I am determined to make the honest tenant, the day-labourer ; in short, the whole industrious little community round me *happy* : to which purpose, I am building cottages, enclosing waste lands, that each may have a garden for his own use, and a field for his cow. I have allotted two clear thousand pounds a year annually, to be spent in making their lives as comfortable as possible : the tear of distress shall never, if I know it, be shed in the county of Devon ; nor the sigh of poverty be ever heard for miles round Bel-
ford

ford Hall. I have already begun the old English custom, of feeding, every Sunday, with furloins of beef and puddings, twenty poor families, which I take in rotation, and by that means they all, in turn, partake of my bounty. I have caused a building to be erected in the Park, solely for this purpose.* You will not see me, Villars, in town this winter.—I have, to say truth, more satisfaction in feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, (for whom I am establishing a woollen and linen manufactory in the next village) than I could possibly find in your gayest assemblies in town, stifled with heat, and pestered with nonsense. And where is the mighty matter, (merit I will not call it) in devoting every year a certain sum for the above uses? It is, my friend,

* The editor presumes the excellent character of this young nobleman, when compared with the vile libertine, the brother of Miss Granby, may afford a striking contrast.

only throwing my expences into another channel, from the *unfeeling* herd, who frequent Newmarket, the gaming tables, &c. I am making great alterations and improvements in my park and gardens, to give bread to the poor : in short, I am endeavouring to make all *happy* round me.—Ah! my Henry, would I could say, I too was so! But, alas, I am pining in the midst of every worldly advantage. That lovely woman, Miss Woodley, whom I, as you may remember, informed you I danced with at an assembly, when I made a little excursion from France with Lord S—, still hangs about my heart, though it is now above two years since. Nothing would then have prevented me from declaring myself immediately the lover of the charming mistress of Woodley Park, but my unfortunate—what shall I call it?—my unhappy *entanglement* in France. It is true, my word, my *honour*, is not absolutely

ly

ly engaged : but, ah ! my Villars, my *gratitude*, my *compassion*, are ties (which to a mind determined to remain inflexibly virtuous) bind me to the poor Julia in bonds I hold sacred : neither can I ever think myself at liberty to dispose of my hand, whilst she remains single or alive : far, far be it from me to avail myself of the little common artifice (which a man often makes use of to get rid of a woman he is not much enamoured with) of saying, “ I have *no* engagement with her because I have actually made *no* promise.” I scorn the mean, the narrow-minded thought of availing myself of such a circumstance. It is true, I feel nothing for Julia more than gratitude, and extreme pity ; but for Miss Woodley, a *passion*, my friend, tender, as violent.—I had indeed begun to hope on my last return from France, and from the continual avocations, in which I busy my mind, that *time* would at length

length *relieve* me, and that if I am ever to give my hand to Julia, I should have likewise a *heart* to bestow with it: but when I tell you a small adventure I have a few days since met with (which I hinted to you at the beginning of my letter) you will not wonder when I declare to the friend of my soul, that I am now more wounded, more miserable than ever.

The particulars you shall have in my next. Adieu,

Your's ever,

BELFORD.

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